THRILLING Love

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a fascinating novelet
By ANN ARDEN

A THRILLING PUBLICATION

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a glamorous nov
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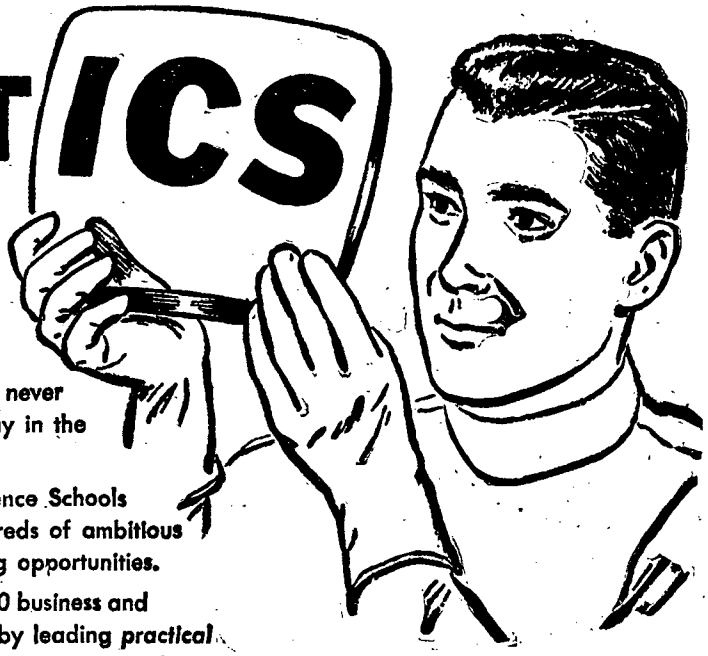

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VOL. LXXII, NO. 2 A THRILLING PUBLICATION June, 1950

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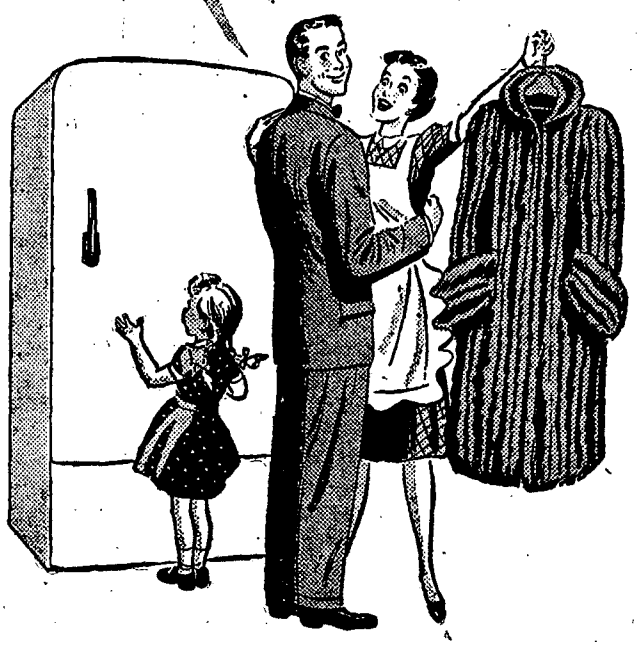

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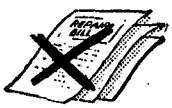

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AN ENCHANTING and enjoyable vacation season is indicated this summer by the favorable placement of the Planets in various Signs of the Zodiac. First and foremost are the prospects for holidays at the seaside and near the lakes. Aquatic and marine pastimes will be popular because Jupiter occupies the Water Sign Pisces, and Uranus is in the Water Sign Cancer. These Planets are in exact trine formation this summer. Therefore, social activities will be centered on boats as well as the beaches.

Camping can also be a popular as well as economical form of recreation, due to the presence of Saturn in the Earth Sign Virgo. Inasmuch as this Sign rules labor and health, summer vacation can be turned into profit and pleasure, such as by working on farms or in gardens.

This also is a good time to lay the foundation of a house since Saturn is the symbol of durable possessions.

Whether you travel, or stay at home, you can have a wonderful time making things of charm and beauty. All you need are a few odds and ends of fabric, or pencil and paper, and plenty of time. The rest is a matter of imagination and inspired impressions. Even if you have never done creative work before, you are likely to surprise your friends as well as yourself with what you can accomplish. Exceptional loveliness can be achieved this summer with a minimum of effort while Mars and Neptune are conjoined in the Sign Libra which rules design and the decorative arts.

Summer theatres, carnivals, and circuses can provide you with amusing entertainment, due to the favorable vibrations Pluto generates in the Sign Leo which rules the stage and social pastimes. Make this a memorable summer by having a happy, interesting vacation!

Is She Extravagant?

PROBLEM: I keep getting into trouble with my husband. He blames me for being extravagant. I admit that I buy some things which I do not need, but I am not deliberately careless with money. Is there anything, from an astrological viewpoint, that can help me convince my husband that I do not mean to be a spendthrift? I was born January 20, 1920.—*Mrs. Anna D. G.*

ANSWER: Actually, you are conscientious about the value of money. This can be said because at your birth Mercury occupied the Sign Capricorn which rules thrift. The Sun was completing its annual transit through the same division of the Zodiac. The Planet Saturn, symbol of frugality, was in trine aspect with the Sun and Mercury. Therefore, you are cautious in most of your purchases.

Nevertheless you can be wasteful, despite your good intentions, due to the square aspects that Mercury and the Sun form with Mars which activates scattering tendencies. The impulse to throw away with one hand, what you save with the other, is emphasized at present by the conjunction that your natal Mars forms with transiting Neptune, the symbol of illusion.

The distorting effect of this configuration causes you to display your sense of economy by accumulating a stockpile of things that you do not need or cannot use for a long time. Momentarily you believe that you are conserving cash by taking advantage of a bargain. As the result of the Mars-Neptune vibrations, your purchase turns out to be an extravagance.

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After Neptune moves out of this zone, your prudent qualities will assert themselves. Also, in the meantime, transiting Saturn will conjoin your natal Mars. This aspect will exert a restraining effect on your expenditures.

She Knows the Answer

PROBLEM: I have to take a long trip this summer, to visit my daughter. I am trying to decide whether I should travel by plane or train? I have never flown. I would like to try it, but my husband does not want me to fly. What does my horoscope indicate? I was born August 9, 1892.—*Mrs. Martha E. C.*

ANSWER: You have the temperament to do things with dramatic intensity because at your birth the Sun transited the Sign Leo which rules the theater. Also, you have pioneering instincts due to the trine aspect that the Sun forms with Jupiter in the Ninth House which rules exploration and long distance travel. Jupiter is the symbol of good fortune. In your horoscope it occupies the Sign Aries which rules adventure.

Although you appear willing to abide by your husband's wishes, you really intend to go by air. This is revealed by the Sun-Mercury conjunction in the Air Sign Libra, in your progressed horoscope. This aspect occurs in direct opposition to the conjunction that progressed Moon forms with your natal Jupiter. Therefore, you are not quite as docile about this matter as you seem.

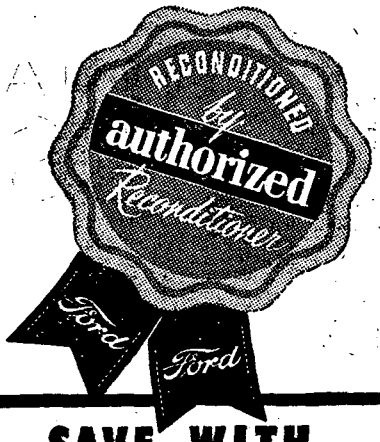
Also, you expect to derive mental pleasure from this air journey. Flying has an intellectual appeal for you because when you were born the Planet Neptune, symbol of impressions, occupied the Air Sign Gemini which rules the intellect and aviation.

Wants to Be Sure

PROBLEM: I have been going with a girl for two years. We had been planning to marry as soon as I got a better job. A few weeks ago she told me that she did not love me as much as she had thought at first. Now she wants to break the engagement.

I have tried to forget her, since that is what she wants, but I can't do it. There is a possibility that I might get her to change her mind if I ask her to marry right away. I want to be sure that we are suited to each

[*Turn page*]



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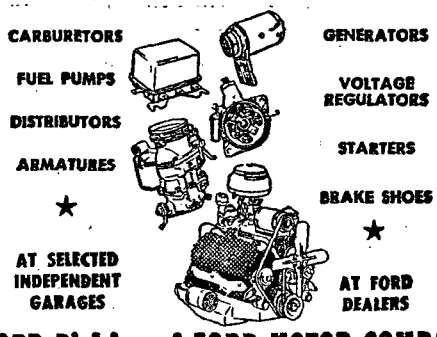

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other, now that the doubts have arisen. Can Astrology supply me with the information I need? Dorothy was born March 25, 1928. I was born January 2, 1927.—*Harvey M. A.*

ANSWER: Your fiancee has an impetuous nature because at her birth the Sun, Uranus, and Jupiter formed a stellium in the Sign Aries which rules extrovert traits. She demands quick action since delays and postponements cause her to lose interest.

You are more methodical inasmuch as you were born when the Sun and Venus occupied the Sign Capricorn which is ruled by the Planet Saturn, symbol of stability and discipline. It is not easy for you to cope with Dorothy's impatient moods.

That you love each other devotedly is revealed by the sextile aspect that your Sun and Venus form with her conjoined Mercury-Venus. In her horoscope this aspect occurs in the Sign Pisces which rules sympathetic attributes. Therefore, she is deeply emotional, and has a profound understanding of human nature. She wants to make you happy, and is capable of doing so, provided you allow yourself to be guided by your sense of affection rather than by your earning capacity.

It is up to you to decide, as you imply. It is necessary to take into consideration that her impulsiveness will clash again and again with your sense of prudence. If you are both willing to compromise, and believe that you can make a success of your marriage on such terms, let love pave the way to your combined future!

Nothing to Fear

PROBLEM: Lately my husband has been paying a lot of attention to my younger sister who is much prettier than I am. Can Astrology tell me if there are any romantic inclinations in his actions? I want to know, for my own peace of mind. My sister was born April 21, 1927; my husband was born August 3, 1917; I was born March 5, 1922.—*Mrs. Alice T. O'B.*

ANSWER: You are exceedingly apprehensive in your impressions because when you were born the Sun, Venus, and Uranus formed a stellium in the Sign Pisces which rules supersensory perceptions. Your feelings are so sensitive that even the thought of indiscreet conduct by your husband has a disturbing effect on you.

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Your husband has a romantic nature. This is revealed in his horoscope by the presence of the Sun, Neptune, and Saturn in the Sign Leo which rules love, social pastimes, and young people. He likes a good time.

Your sister's youthfulness appeals to him. An enduring attachment between them is not probable because on the day of her birth the Sun began its yearly transit through the Fixed Sign Taurus, in square aspect with his Sun Sign. They are cordial toward each other now, since your husband's progressed Moon conjoins your sister's natal Sun. After this temporary aspect is concluded, their mutual accord may vanish also. Some years hence you might wish they were more congenial toward each other.

In the meantime his love for you will intensify because of the harmonious relationship between the stellium in your Sun Sign, with his natal Mars in the Sign Cancer which rules women. Do not question his fidelity. Suspicion can breed harmful marital conditions. By having complete trust in your husband, your life and his, as well as your sister's, can follow a serene and happy course.

Money Worries

PROBLEM: A few months ago, when my baby was born, I had to borrow money to pay the doctor and the hospital bills. Recently I needed another loan for extensive house repairs. I was never in debt before. I feel humiliated at not being able to pay back what I owe. My current income just covers my weekly expenses. What does Astrology show about my future financial prospects? I was born June 10, 1917.—*Fred A. R.*

ANSWER: A solution of your problem may have occurred already, due to the trine aspect that is being formed by Jupiter with Uranus in your solar Second House which rules money. Since Jupiter occupies your solar Tenth House which rules your career and prestige, you may be the recipient of financial benefit through promotion to a position of authority.

In the meantime family duties will continue to be arduous while Saturn is concluding its long transit through your solar Fourth House which rules home and family. You have to take this stress into consideration, so as not to permit household obligations to

(Continued on page 93)

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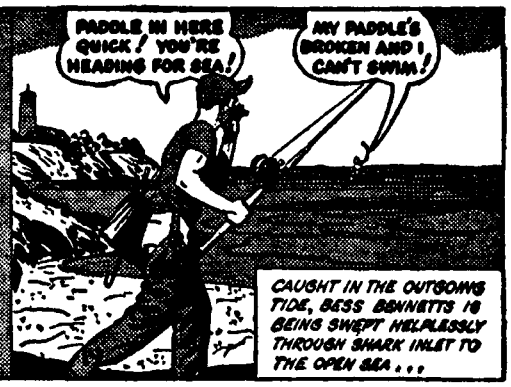
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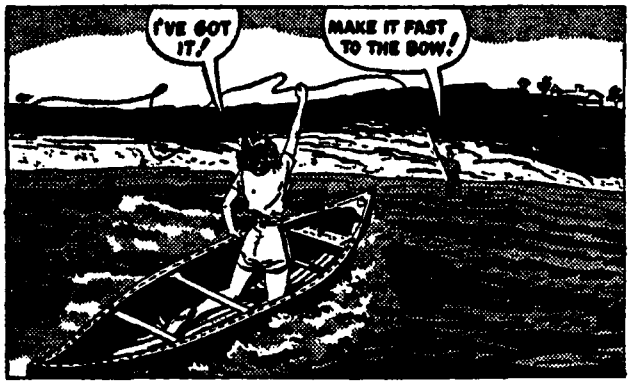
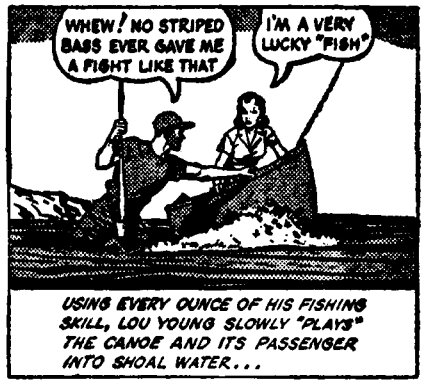
MY PADDLE'S BROKEN AND I CAN'T SWIM!
CAUGHT IN THE OUTGOING TIDE, BESS BENNETTS IS BEING SWEPT HELPLESSLY THROUGH SHARK INLET TO THE OPEN SEA . . .




WHEW! NO STRIPED BASS EVER GAVE ME A FIGHT LIKE THAT
I'M A VERY LUCKY "FISH"
USING EVERY OUNCE OF HIS FISHING SKILL, LOU YOUNG SLOWLY "PLAYS" THE CANOE AND ITS PASSENGER INTO SHOAL WATER . . .

FOR THE QUICKEST, EASIEST SHAVES YOU EVER HAD WITH A LOW-PRICE BLADE, TRY THIN GILLETTES. THEY'RE PLENTY KEEN, FIT YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR PRECISELY, AND PROTECT YOU FROM IRRITATION CAUSED BY MISFIT BLADES. ASK FOR THIN GILLETTES IN THE CONVENIENT 10-BLADE PACKAGE
THIN Gillette
10-25¢
4-10¢
NEW TEN-BLADE PACKAGE HAS COMPARTMENT FOR USED BLADES

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DIAMOND *in the Sky*

A Novelet by JEAN FRANCIS WEBB

CHAPTER I

END OF AN ILLUSION

JOSIE reached the bench in the park a few minutes early. A last afterglow hadn't quite faded from the westward sky beyond the Hudson.

She sat down slowly—humming a tiny, excited tune—to wait for Lance. He had told her to meet him in plenty of time for dinner. And he had sounded triumphant, promising her a terriffic surprise.

"And do I have a surprise for *you*, Mr. Neer-

Josie Wickware put the jewelry business ahead of romance—until she found love without flaw that held a wealth of hidden fire and beauty!

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gaard!" she sang under her breath, so pleased with herself that she all but preened. "A chance to nail the Sloane account for our office doesn't come every day!"

"Our office!" The words thrilled her. They meant the small, brisk establishment of Neergaard & Wickware. Diamond brokers were in and out of those two constricted rooms all day, trying to consummate their various deals, while Wanda Tuttle's typewriter clattered in the outer chamber.

Josie adored every hour in that office; though learning about the business she and Lance had inherited still demanded aching concentration.

"A date to paint the town with Victor Sloane's only son!" She might have been rehearsing, under her breath, what she was going to say to Lance. "I've toiled for *weeks* to make that young man really notice me! Lance, if I can get him to talk his father into buying from us!"

A small girl with a hoop and stick skipped past the bench, clinging to the hand of a uniformed nurse. They must be returning to one of those sets of lighted windows high above the purring traffic of Fifth Avenue.

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star! How I wonder what you are!" the child chanted. "Up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky. . . ."

Josie leaned back, staring up at the clear purple distance. "Like a diamond." One bright, sharp pinpoint of light already glittered, 'way up yonder. It *did* look like a diamond. "Star light, star bright, first star I've seen tonight! I wish I may, I wish I might, have the wish I wish tonight!" The wish, of course, was brilliant success for the business—the small, respected diamond brokerage firm her father and Lance's had left behind them, when the plane crashed six months ago!

Like a diamond! She wasn't Mark Wickware's daughter for nothing! He'd loved diamonds more than he ever could love his motherless daughter.

Josie had grown up in boarding schools, lonely, wistful; seeing her handsome father only once or twice each year. Diamonds had been her successful rival for his affections, always. She had grown up quite certain the firm was the most important thing in the world. Something sacred.

All through her childhood she had dreamed of growing up and going to work, some day, at Mark's rugged side. Part of Neergaard & Wickware! Part of the world her adored father was so utterly absorbed in!

BUT then last winter, while she was finishing her last year of college, had come the stunning, incredible news. A plane returning from London had plummeted into the Atlantic. Both Mark Wickware and Pieter Neergaard, his senior partner, Lance's father, were gone forever.

Lance had been magnificent, during those first weeks of black desolation. He had seemed to realize that she couldn't go on studying—waiting through numb months for a meaningless Graduation Day beyond which she could see nothing. He had suggested that she come to New York immediately and take her place in their firm—Mark's place, now so blankly empty.

She knew, now, that she never could have lived through those weeks without Lance. But he had taken care to see that every hour of every day was filled for her with learning the endless details of a diamond broker's business. He had passed on all the lore Pieter had taught him, making the lessons so exhausting that she had been able to sleep at night. And, very gradually, the world had begun to revolve once more. There was solid earth under her feet again. Her sherry-hued eyes lost their emptiness.

The sound of a light, swift footfall on the path brought her gaze swiftly from the far-off diamond in the sky. Lance was striding toward her through the shadows, tall and lean and grinning his white grin.

"Have I kept you waiting, Josie? Got snarled up in traffic."

His firm, strong hands caught hers

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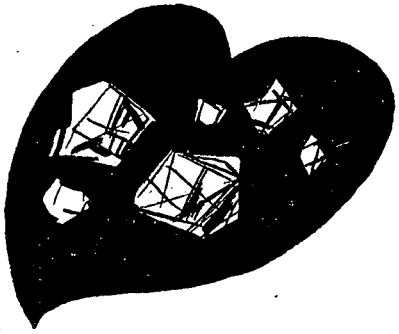
and held them, as he sank down quickly onto the bench beside her. His blue eyes were fixed on her lifted face with that electric vitality which always made things seem to move faster when Lance was around.

"I was early," Josie said.

He kept on looking at her and smiling. Slowly, slowly, her own smile faded. A sharp little needle of guilt stabbed into her. There was something too warm and tender and personal about that light in Lance's eyes. They were the eyes of a man in love, who expected to be loved back.

And she had never said anything to let him believe she was in love with him!



Oh, no, she hadn't! Maybe—maybe he had mistaken her fascination in what he was teaching her for a certain feeling about the teacher. Maybe her eagerness to learn had seemed to him to be another sort of eagerness. But that wasn't her fault! She'd never once been sentimental. Never once.

"I promised I'd have big news to tell you, Josie." He was trying to draw her to her feet. "But it'll keep till we're at dinner. Come on!"

Gently, firmly, she resisted the pressure. "We each have good news, Lance. Bradford Sloane telephoned the office just after you did, and guess what? He's asked me to go night-clubbing with him —tonight!"

"Sloane?" Lance shrugged. "Old Victor Sloane's playboy heir? Didn't realize you knew him. Of course you told him you were already dated."

"Lance!" Josie cried. "Be sensible! Victor Sloane owns the most posh jewelry shop on Park Avenue. If he bought diamonds through us, we'd earn *fabulous* commissions. I've spent *weeks* being nice to Brad at parties, so he'd ask me out. Well, he finally called the office this afternoon!"

"Look here, Josie? You didn't say you'd go out with him tonight?"

There was a new, hard edge to Lance's question. Her brown eyes met his blue ones unblinkingly. "Naturally I did. I only met you to tell you. Lance, I couldn't turn down something I've worked for as hard as I have for this date. Girls simply *mob* Brad Sloan. I couldn't risk offending him."

The blue eyes had frozen. "But you had a date. With me."

"Lance, we can talk any time. Tomorrow, at the office. And this opportunity to get Victor Sloane's business is so important."

"Not as important, to me, as having dinner with you." Lance said it softly. "Josie, I don't like my girl dating other men. My future wife—"

"Wife?" Her slim figure stiffened. "Oh, no, Lance! I mean—not for years, at least. Maybe some day, after the firm's built up again to where my father always wanted it to be." She could not look at him any longer.

On nearby Fifth Avenue, the hum of traffic was like the lulling murmur of a river. Figures passing in the late twilight were dim, unreal.

"Maybe?" he echoed quietly. "Some day? That's not what you've been letting me believe lately, Josie. Every time you've smiled at me, you knew what I was thinking. Working so near you, day after day."

Her voice was unsteady. "Lance! I'm sorry—honestly sorry. You were teaching me so much I didn't know about diamonds. You've worked with them so long. You know so much. If—if I seemed fascinated—"

"It was with the lessons, not me? Is that it?"

"Yes, Lance." She was amazed at how much each word cost her. "You know

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I'm fond of you. Terribly fond of you. When I was a kid, you always were my hero. When Dad let me come to New York for a school vacation, I always thought you were wonderful. Like a knight errant or something."

SHE tried to laugh lightly, to tease him out of this present frozen harshness and back into the warm, devoted Lance she'd always known. But somehow the laughter seemed to go sour on her lips to have a tinny ring.

"Remember the time we decided this bench would always be our secret rendezvous? Because I could look down on it from Dad's apartment windows and see when you were waiting? How old was I? Twelve?"

Lance's firm mouth had set in a straight line. "Spare me the quaint memories, Josie. They don't seem to have added up to much."

Exasperation flicked at her, then. "Lance, be reasonable! Victor Sloane is in Rio, buying Brazilian emeralds. By the time he gets back, I must have Brad enthusiastic about Neergaard and Wickware!"

Lance laughed shortly. "It would take a girl to figure out *that* sort of approach! I can't say I'm crazy about my partner's ethics."

Josie's small hand itched, suddenly, to slap his stubborn, handsome, scornful face. "You've no reason to act so high and mighty, Lance Neergaard! If your father's handling of our finances hadn't been quite so free and easy, maybe we wouldn't need new outlets like Sloane so urgently."

Lance sat like a tall, blond statue, staring back at her. "What you mean is, my father drained out most of his half of the working capital in those last three years before he died. And left us strapped."

Josie was regretting, already, what she had let her stung pride give voice to.

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Brad halted at the table and bowed to Josie

"It was his money, Lance, of course. He had the right. But it did weaken us. So I'm determined to build us up again."

"You know where that money went, Josie. To his two sisters and to his brother's widow and children, back in Amsterdam. They were starving. The Nazis had left them nothing. They were his flesh and blood, and if he hadn't helped them and then kept on helping—" The harsh voice broke off. "It surprises me to learn you feel he should have let them all die."

"I don't mean that! You *know* I don't! I wish I hadn't grown so angry."

Lance cut in coldly. "You've been re-

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senting it. Obviously."

"Lance!" Josie protested desperately. "I adored your father. He was *my* father's partner and best friend. I called him Uncle Pieter."

"Don't bother to explain." Lance stood up abruptly. His strong-featured face was set and white, under its tan. His thick, unruly yellow hair was tarnished by the twilight. "You seem to feel one way about the business risks he took to help his family. And I feel another. That's all there is to it. I won't detain you. You mustn't keep Brad Sloane waiting."

He strode away so swiftly that Josie's gasp of protest could not even reach his ears. She sat there, shaking like a leaf in a winter wind, staring after him. Her eyes were wide with grief. But slowly, anger began to spark in them too.

Lance had no right to treat her like this! He knew she hadn't meant anything against his father! It was just that he'd wanted to punish her, because she'd broken a date with him.

She was already on her own feet, clicking along grimly in the opposite direction, when she realized that he never had told her what his good news was. *Her* news had touched off dynamite too soon to give him time!

The night on the town with Bradford Sloane was a brilliant success. At least, they made a gay tour of all the most fabulous places. At least, Josie's burnished copper head was never far from his protective shoulder while they danced over one slick floor after another. At least, her red lips were parted in an almost constant arc of laughter.

What she felt like inside, after that quarrel with Lance, didn't matter. The important thing was that she made Brad like her better and better. He was begging her to see him every evening for the rest of the week, by the time he returned her—near dawn—to the apartment which once had belonged to Mark Wickware. His dark eyes followed her fascinatedly as she waved good night and closed her door softly between them.

Despite the late hour at which she had smiled good night to Brad, Josie walked into the small mid-town suite of offices of Neergaard & Wickware only a few minutes past opening time next morning. Wanda Tuttle sat at her typewriter tapping out invoices. Lance had not come in yet.

Josie went into the inner office and sat down behind one of the twin desks near the window—just as if this were any ordinary morning, just as if she had not been wretched all night long because they'd quarreled.

There was no point in letting unhappiness interfere with business however. She took off her silly froth of a flowered hat, slipped it into the drawer reserved for it, and became the efficient young executive she had set out to become. The executive Mark Wickware would have applauded.

WANDA had left a letter on her desk. It was from a man named John Rackowe, and it offered for sale a certain ABC stone newly arrived from a small mine in Chile. Studying the letter Rackowe had written, Josie let her forehead wrinkle perplexedly. She still dared make no important decisions without consulting Lance's experience. ABC—that meant a gem accurately appraisable, not speculative as to value. Still, the price made her uncertain. But for a blue stone—thirty carats?

She was still pondering Rackowe's asking price when the door opened. Lance walked in quietly.

"Lance," she began, speaking swiftly, "I'm sorry about last night. I didn't mean to hurt you about Uncle Pieter. It's too bad you left angry."

Lance's blue eyes stared down at her across her desk. They were as hard as any diamond from Chile. And as bright. "I'm leaving more than a girl on a park bench, Josie. I'm leaving the firm."

"Leaving?" she gasped. "*Lance!* What are you talking about?"

"It shouldn't be too hard to understand. As you pointed out last night, my father pulled most of the Neergaard out of Neergaard & Wickware. He cabled it overseas. But *your* father's money stayed in. So the ancestral business is rightfully your baby. I'm renouncing all claims."

"Y-you're not serious? Why, it's our fathers' old partnership—"

"Don't worry." Lance spoke from between stiff lips. "I'm not deserting in

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a tough time. I'll buy my way out. There won't be a dollar of Neergaard debts for you to cover. Remember I had news for you last night?"

In stricken silence, Josie nodded. The familiar office seemed to be revolving slowly, beyond Lance's bright head and wide shoulders.

"I bought a rough diamond from a man named Hennecker, last week. A speculation stone. It was gray as a dirty blob of ice, with black specks like pepper flecked all through it." He spoke swiftly, tonelessly, his face void of expression. "I knew it might shatter on the girdler. I knew no saw blade would ever slice it, without cleaving. But I bought it."

From his pocket he had produced a small chamois sack, closed with a drawstring. He opened it with a tug of one fingertip, still talking.

"I had illusion on that stone, I guess. But the hunch was strong." Staring up at him, Josie knew exactly what he meant. When a man in the diamond business said he had illusion on a stone, he was saying that—logically or illogically, sometimes almost as if in a trance—he had a sure-fire conviction that the diamond would bring him a spectacular profit.

Lance dumped a tiny alp of glittering white fire onto her desk. The finished gems poured flashingly out of the open chamois sack.

"Jiggs Moseby cut it the same day I bought it. I got the results yesterday. My hunch was good. That was what I wanted to tell you, last night. The yield will run to somewhere near a hundred and eighty a carat. It's my share of the firm's obligations, Josie. Our lawyers can work out the formal dissolution of the partnership. And that's all there is."

She had not even glanced at the diamonds. "But—where?—W-what—"

"I've landed on my feet. Elmer Garth, of Garth Inc., has been after me to take a salary and work for him, ever since news came the plane had crashed. I called last night to tell him to add my name to the payroll."

The complete, cold finality of it struck at Josie like some invisible fist. "This is all nonsense, Lance! As soon as you've cooled off—"

"Good-by, Josie," he interrupted quietly, his steady blue gaze holding hers. "Good luck with young Mr. Sloane." He turned and walked through the door, closing it behind him as if it were a page of the dead past.

Josie sat staring at the blank panel blindly. For the first time, the office of Neergaard & Wickware seemed something less than an enchanted place. Suddenly, a wild sob choked into her throat and she threw herself forward, burying her tear-streaked face in limply outflung arms; arms which swept aside the shimmering stones of Lance Neergaard's illusion.

CHAPTER II

Diamond Dust

THE MONTH which moved past her, in a methodical procession of days, after Lance's abrupt exit from the office their fathers had established—it should have been a happy, triumphant four weeks. Certainly she had everything she'd ever wanted. She was more than part of her father's beloved business she was the whole works. And Brad Sloane was so flatteringly attentive that there would have been no room in her days for any other man, even if Lance weren't being so stubborn about staying away.

Josie had put off taking up the dissolution of the firm with her lawyer, from day to day. At first she had felt sure Lance would cool off and return. Then, as time dragged past and there was no sign of him, it got to be something she would attend to tomorrow. Always tomorrow. But if she weren't busy she would invent jobs that absolutely demanded her full attention, during any given today.

She wondered, sometimes, what Mark Wickware would have thought if he could have seen the changes in his almost monastic office. These days, there were flowers everywhere. One morning, three dozen roses with Brad's card reading: *For my own idea of the American Beauty.* The next afternoon, a fabulous clump of orchids with a note to say:

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My sire can have Rio and his emeralds—give me Little Old New York and you!

Brad monopolized every hour of her time that she could spare away from the office and sleep. His dapper, slim, expertly-tailored figure had become practically a standard fixture at Josie's elbow. His sleek dark head had bent attentively to her copper-red one in every smart spot in town. Columnists were reporting their appearances together as a matter of course. Her campaign to fascinate Victor Sloane's son was a triumph.

So there was really no reason at all—no logical reason—why the days she lived through should seem shoddy and worthless, like so much bort. Yet often, too often, she found herself making that unexciting comparison. Bort are defectively crystallized diamonds, usually fit only to be crushed into diamond dust for use in polishing or cutting better gems.

Certainly, she wasn't in love with Lance Neergaard. If she'd been in love with him, she would have melted into his arms that evening on the park bench, wouldn't she? Yet waiting for the phone to ring and have his voice at the other end of it, waiting for him to open the office door, took up an amazing amount of each day. It left her feeling exhausted.

"I'll call the reorganized firm Wickware & Wickware," she told herself, doggedly, trying to feel properly pleased about it. "For Mark and me. Oh, Dad, if you were only here! Then I wouldn't feel so—so *lost!*"

She had been struggling with one of those sunk, lost feelings the afternoon Wanda put through a call from Brad to her desk phone. When he heard her answer, Brad's voice took on a warm and eager ring.

"We're painting Manhattan in style tonight, my proud beauty. We have something very special and important to celebrate!"

Josie frowned vaguely at her receiver. "Celebrate, Brad? What?"

"It's our anniversary. One month ago tonight, we had our first date. Be ready in your best bib and tucker at nine, Josie. I'll be around."

Dutifully, Josie did her best to make the reflection in her dressing-table mirror something Brad could be proud of. Her vivid hair was burnished to a gleaming cap and swirled high over her small, proud head. Her champagne slipper satin gown revealed creamy shoulders and clung to full young curves. Her lips were tinted with the newest shade of exotic red.

Evidently, Brad liked the results. When he first glimpsed her, moving to meet him across her foyer, an appreciative whistle puckered his lazily good-natured mouth. His dark eyes were still studying her, with a special gleam in them, as they walked into the Club Bagdad twenty minutes later and followed the head waiter to a choice table for two.

Suave music murmured through the famous supper club like the sigh of a romantic memory. Brad ordered deftly, a lifetime of dinners in just such spots behind his casual selections. Then he put aside the menu and smiled fondly into her eyes, his own dark ones assured and possessive.

"Did you notice your ex-partner as we came in, beautiful?"

Josie's heart jerked suddenly. "Lance? You mean, he's here somewhere?"

"At that big table to the right of the door. He's with Angelica Garth again, I see. Those two are becoming quite a romance item."

SLOWLY, painfully, Josie turned her burnished head. The big blond man at that table for six was Lance, all right. She felt taut as a violin string, inside, as she watched him turn from the girl on his left to the dowager on his right.

"Is that Angelica Garth?" she heard her own voice saying, thinly. "That silver blonde with the green eyes, sitting just beyond him?"

Brad's smooth head nodded. "They say he's rushing her but hard."

"Garth." Josie turned her back on the sextette near the door, deliberately. "He works for Elmer Garth. She's his daughter, of course." Her stiff lips twisted. "I didn't think Lance would use methods like that."

"To get ahead?" Brad shrugged. "The way I hear it, Neergaard stands on his own feet at Garth, Inc. And anyway Angelica isn't the old curmudgeon's

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chee-ild. She's a niece. Something an impoverished dead brother left behind. Poor as sin when Elmer took her in—and still is."

"Still Lance is using her to impress a doting uncle!"

"Elmer Garth never doted on anything but his bank balance. He's a sour old skinflint, and supporting Angie must be only a frugal duty. Besides, Neergaard was well on his way up at Garth, Inc., before they met."

Josie spoke carefully. "You seem to know all about Lance, Brad."

"Why not? I want anything that's associated with you to be partly *my* business, too." The dark, lazy eyes across from her kindled swiftly. "I've been checking. And your ex-partner's dates with Angelica come under the heading of free charity, if anything. Old Elmer calls him a white hope. Neergaard's already his trusted personal purchasing agent. The smart talk even says he'll be offered a junior partnership down there, soon."

Charity? Although she did not glance toward that gay party of six again, Angelica's pert, spirited, pretty face was engraved on her memory. A man could go overboard, very easily, for a girl who looked like that. And really she had known all along that Lance was above rushing anyone for reasons of politics. His scorn that night in the park, had been as biting as a whiplash. "It would take a girl to figure out that approach!"

Suddenly, instinctively, Josie knew that Lance had turned and seen her. She could feel that blue, clear gaze fix on her back. She *knew*.

With desperate gaiety, she began to talk. "Well, I'm certainly glad to hear how well he's getting along. I was worried." The words froze in her throat. "Oh, Brad! Here he *comes!* Please don't let him find us sitting here."

But it was too late already. Lance's tall, muscular figure had halted its lithe advance at the arm of her chair. He was nodding to Brad.

"Hello, Sloane. Mind if I steal my former co-worker for once around the floor? Hello, Josie. Come on and dance with me, for old times' sake."

Stiffly, unwillingly, she rose from her place. With an automatic smile of apology toward Brad, she let Lance's arms close around her. The persuasive whisper of the music caught them up, and they were dancing.

"You're looking wonderful, Josie," he said, after a moment.

The feel of his firm, light embrace was still so upsetting that Josie could barely stammer, a "Th—thank you." Then silence fell again. She thought, in panic, that it might never end. Frantic words broke from her. "I—I hear you're doing wonderfully well with Elmer Garth, Lance."

"I've had a few lucky breaks. A couple of deals I made in the dark panned out. So the boss thinks I'm a magician, or something."

The low, casual words barely stirred in her gleaming hair. But it was amazing what just hearing that voice again could do to her. Oh, she wasn't in love with Lance Neergaard! She never had been! He was a stubborn, bad-tempered,

[*Turn page*]

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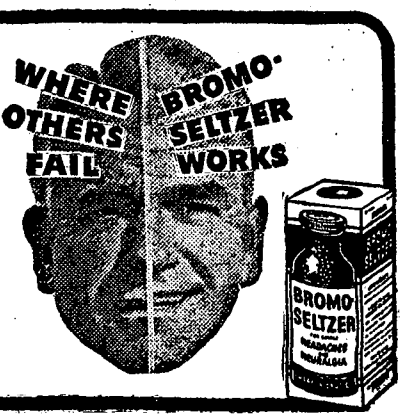

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unforgiving brute, who misbehaved at the first fancied slight.

"I've wondered—I mean, Wanda and I have wondered how you were getting on. She'll be glad to hear such good news, Lance."

"Good old Wanda! Give her my best regards."

This time, the silence did last until the music broke. Lance returned her to Brad with a stiff, formal little bow of thanks. There was no more emotion to his polite farewell than if he were placing some doll he had been examining back on her shelf. Josie sat staring at the white tablecloth wretchedly. If he felt so indifferent, why dance with her at all? He hadn't even apologized for his rudeness, that last day in the office!

It was the next morning, after a night of sleepless twisting and tossing, that she arrived at the office to find the Rackowe ABC stone had just been delivered. Previously, she had been uncertain about the wisdom of buying that diamond. Now, it seemed to her like a lifetime tossed to a drowning swimmer. It meant she wouldn't have to sit in the office and think about Lance.

She could take the diamond to Jiggs Moseby.

MOSEBY'S shop, in a dingy loft building far west of Broadway, was a mecca for diamond traders. The squat, twisted old man—little bigger than a dwarf—had been one of Mark Wickware's earliest friends in the business. Most of Neergaard & Wickware's stones had found their way to Moseby's thick, skilful hands for manufacture. Josie had known this dark, odd-smelling workroom since the earliest of her school-vacation visits.

Jiggs took the ABC stone and rolled it thoughtfully between thumb and forefinger. Still breathless from flights of stairs, Josie watched him. Presently the old man glanced up. "Pretty goods, Miss Josephine."

Something in his voice struck her. Josie glanced at him sharply.

"What you mean is—*safe* goods. That's what you're thinking, isn't it? No risk such as Lance might have dared to take, for a big gain. Just a safe, small profit." It was true. But she didn't *know* enough to risk anything more definite.

"I sure do miss seeing Mr. Lance around," Jiggs said. "He's a fine lad. His father's Dutch diamond wisdom and his mother's American pep and grit—they blended well in him. I'll look at this with my loupe, Miss."

With the loupe screwed into one eye socket, the aged cutter looked more like a gnome than ever. He seemed lost in examining the magnified diamond. Behind him, an electric motor rigged to a cutter's wheel made a lumpy outline in shadows which smelled of hot oil and abrasive dust.

He looked at her again. "I can cut it so you'll realize a nice profit—not sensational, but nice. Well, Miss Josephine, not much going on around town these days, is there? Except I've been told that Ice MacDowell is back in the city again. Did you ever hear of him, now?"

"Ice MacDowell?" The name seemed instantly familiar. "Is he a thin, small, dark man with a sharp face and a scar? I think Dad pointed him out to me, once, in a restaurant. I remember his odd nickname."

"Not so odd, Miss, for a man in the diamond game. But of course he's washed up with *that* now. Who'd trust him? He's been doing time up the river for trying to switch a bunch of cheap naats for an ABC series some out-of-towner bought off him. He'd do better not to come back to New York."

Josie wasn't really thinking about Ice. "Perhaps he's turned a new leaf?"

"One crooked deal's enough to end a man in diamonds. If his good name's gone, he's finished. I'll call you when this order's done, miss."

Back at the office, faced at last with the four walls she had been avoiding all morning, Josie listened to the swift clatter of Wanda's typewriter, and matched it with the stepped-up beating of her heart. If only Brad had picked any other spot in town, last night, but the Bagdad!

"I won't think about Lance any more!" she told herself firmly, gripping the edge of her desk. "I'll think about—about business!"

The diamond business. She still adored it; it was still her whole world, as it had been her father's. Jiggs had been so

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right about the high ethics it demanded. She was proud to be part of them!

"Lance should have understood that. He should have realized I couldn't just give up all this, turn my back on a wonderful opportunity to get important new business. It was too much to assume that I'd swoon in his arms the first minute he decided I was engaged to him!"

Lance again? But she wasn't going to think about Lance!

"If he thought this office couldn't get along without him, he was *much* mistaken! I may not know how to make spectacular gambles. But I can build up business on safe deals, little by little, until—until what?"

There wasn't any answer to that. Once the office was secure again, the future was blank. Brad? Mrs. Bradford Sloane? She tried the name over and over, determinedly. But it had a bitter taste on her tongue.

CHAPTER III

Love Through a Loupe

IT WAS startling how many times during the week which followed she stumbled upon the name of Lance Neergaard coupled with that of Angelica Garth in the minor notes of the cafe columnists. Pieter Neergaard had been a sufficiently picturesque figure to give his son mild news value, and as Elmer Garth's niece and ward, Angelica bore a name that people might recognize. Evidently the rush Lance was giving his blonde was an every night affair.

Well, she ought to feel very pleased with herself. That's the way she *ought* to feel. For she had been the young lady who had been smart enough not to toss over the business interests of the firm because a handsome young man with blue eyes had looked at her pleadingly on a park bench.

She hadn't let herself be swept off her feet by emotions. She had looked at love—and at the firm—with the careful scrutiny of a jeweler using his double-lensed magnifying loupe. And she had made a wise choice. For now, a month later, Lance was already in love with somebody else. That was how long love was apt to last! A good thing she'd kept free of it!

If only she could *feel* free, instead of as though there were a millstone chained around her heart, dragging it down and down!

The morning a big square envelope lay on top of the mail Wanda had stacked neatly on her desk had begun like any other—with Josie waking from fitful and unrefreshing sleep too late to do more than gulp her fruit juice and coffee before she left for the office. And with that old feeling of unwillingness to enter the domain of Neergaard & Wickware growing stronger inside her as each block brought her nearer it. And with Josie's firmly disciplining herself and marching through the door.

Wanda's cheerful "Good morning!" was the same as usual. The grim gesture with which Josie placed her hat in its desk drawer, that was the same. But the square, heavy envelope riding her other mail was different.

She opened it curiously. Only invitations came in envelope like this. It was an invitation: *Mr. Elmer Garth requests the pleasure of your company at dinner. . . .*

It was for Thursday. But why should Elmer Garth be requesting *her* company? Mark Wickware had known him, in a business way. But Josie herself never had met the crusty old diamond tycoon.

"It must be out of respect to Dad," she told herself, reading the engraved card again. "The only other explanation—is ridiculous!"

Suddenly, her hand was shaking so hard she could no longer hold the white sheet. For the other explanation, the truly obvious one, was far more credible. The dinner was an announcement party. And what was to be announced would be of interest to Lance's friends as well as Elmer's!

Her 'phone rang. Josie groped for it mechanically. Brad's cheerful, lazy voice assailed her ear. "Good morning, gorgeous! Big news! There's a cable on my desk from Brazil. The pater's arriving this weekend!"

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"There's someone in the office, Brad, and I can't talk now." She hung up almost too hastily for politeness. She was shaking; chilled to the bone although it was warm in the small, neat chamber. What she had told Brad was no lie. There *was* someone in the office with her. But he was invisible. *"Lance!"* she gasped painfully, covering her face with those trembling hands. "Oh, Lance, I can't believe it's true!"

The days between Monday and Thursday meant nothing. They were dull gray blanks, filled with disjointed scraps—dealers filing in and out of Neergaard & Wickware on their routine calls, Brad's intimate smile across tables in restaurants she couldn't even remember, Wanda's racing typewriter keys, stacks of letters to be answered, sleepless hours in bed.

On Thursday evening, dressed carefully but automatically in a new and shimmering draped gown of sea green, Josie rode upward in a luxurious elevator to the penthouse suite overlooking Sutton Place and the East River which was Elmer Garth's gold-plated retreat from the teeming city.

Like a condemned prisoner walking the last mile, she walked into the already-crowded drawingroom toward which a uniformed maid had indicated the way. Many of the faces scattered through the crowd were familiar, men in the diamond world, once associates of Mark Wickware, who nodded casual greetings to Mark's daughter or murmured a pleasant "Good evening."

Josie made blind, unthinking responses as she crossed the room. Her glance had found Lance as she came through the door. He was the tallest man in the room, more handsome than ever in evening clothes. His golden hair was as vivid as fire against the somber elegance of the imported paneling. Angelica, tiny and lovely as a flower, clung to his arm.

Josie paused beside them. "What a nice party your uncle sets up, Miss Garth!" she said, forcing the right smile to accompany the speech.

LANCE had straightened to almost military attention at her approach. "Angelica," he said, quietly, "you've heard me talk about Josie Wickware."

"So often I used to wonder, sometimes, if you knew anybody else!" The cool green eyes studied Josie carefully. Then Angelica smiled. It was not a warm, impulsive smile so much as a change of beautiful masks, Josie felt. "You must miss Lance terribly, nowadays, Miss Wickware. Around your office, I mean, of course. It must be hard to get along without him."

Josie met the silent challenge steadily. "The one who'd *really* be missed at Neergaard & Wickware, I'm afraid, is Wanda Tuttle. She's run everything there since Lance and I were infants, hasn't she, Lance?"

Angelica gave him no time to answer. Her light, gay voice closed in with practiced swiftness on the last of Josie's words.

"Neergaard & Wickware? Isn't that ancient history? Lance told me, ever so long ago, that he had resigned from the firm."

"Our lawyers haven't gotten around to making it official, yet," said Josie, her heart twisting inside her. Her eyes were on Lance's hewn, tanned face. But it told her nothing. Neither did his unblinking blue eyes.

"Lance!" Angelica murmured. "There are General and Mrs. Porter, just coming in. I do want them to know you. I'm sure Miss Wickware won't mind." And Josie found herself standing alone, watching their retreating backs; Lance's so tall and straight and broad-shouldered, the girl's so slim.

"Miss Wickware, isn't it?" Not until a dry, harsh voice asked the question did she realize Elmer Garth had paused at her side. She turned, still dazed, to meet the stabbing scrutiny of black eyes like shrewd shoebuttons under shaggy clumps of greying browns. "Nice of you to come, tonight. I had my secretary send you an invitation because I've wanted to do something for Mark's child since I heard the sad news about him."

Josie, staring back, had a confused impression the gaunt tycoon was on a top of some sort. He seemed to be spinning before her eyes. Her knees felt weak. "Th—then I wasn't asked because—because you're announcing something?"

"There's nothing to announce. Yet." Garth's glance darted beyond her and

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found Lance and Angelica with the newest arrivals at the door. "I saw you looking after my young man as if you'd like him back, my dear."

Josie went crimson. "I—I'm sure Lance is much more Angelica's type."

"I didn't mean personally, but in a business sense, of course. Lance is even smarter about diamonds than Pieter Neergaard before him!" Garth cackled slyly. "I wouldn't let go of that boy for a million dollars. So don't try to lure him back, my dear."

If the old man only knew! There was nowhere in New York that Lance was less apt to want to be than in the same office which held Josie Wickware! "I'm sure Lance will always make his own decisions, Mr. Garth."

"Decisions can be colored. By junior partnerships, for example."

Josie had to choke back a burst of wild laughter, bitter laughter, at the ironic picture of Elmer Garth's thinking he had to warn her off Lance. "Believe me, I'm delighted Lance is doing so nicely."

"*Nicely* is a namby-pamby word." The old man cackled again, his shrewd little eyes glinting. "That lad's a humdinger! Just tonight, he delivered to me here a single stone he'd purchased for my firm. As big as a hothouse strawberry, greenish, milky. Sixty carats if it weighs one. It will manufacture like a dream. At least two emerald cuts in it, and they'll total at least forty-five carats."

"You don't have to convince me that Lance knows diamonds, sir."

Garth squinted at her maliciously. "But the price the boy paid for it! It was practically a free gift, you might say! No, my dear, I'll not be letting Lance Neergaard quit my outfit, now I've got him into it!"

Her host was still chuckling as he made off to greet other guests. Josie watched him go. Then her sherry-brown gaze veered slightly, until it came to rest on Angelica and Lance. The girl's tiny hand lay on his dark sleeve, fingers slightly cupped as if ready to close into a tight clutch at the first sign of any threat to their possession of that arm. Old Elmer wasn't the only one who meant to hold onto Lance Neergaard!

Through the mist of misery which dimmed Lance's tall figure suddenly, Josie heard the butler's pompous voice from the doorway, announcing to the assemblage that dinner was served.

The numb desolation which had moved in on her at that moment, despite the fact that Lance's engagement to Angelica had not been the reason for her invitation to Elmer Garth's dinner, continued until noon the next day. Even Brad's call to ask her to lunch did not lift it.

She met him at one of their usual midday haunts, sky-garden restaurant atop one of the smart apartment buildings lining Central Park South. From their table for two, Josie could look out across acres of rolling treetops, piled up like waves and stretching off beyond her eye's range. Cars whisked along the ribbons of driveway like racing beetles.

BRAD was grinning triumphantly as he finished ordering. "Remember I told you there was a cable from Brazil yesterday?"

"Your father?"

"The office heard from him again this morning. En route. His plane hits La Guardia Field tomorrow morning at eleven." The lazy grin deepened. "This is your chance to land Sloane as a client, beautiful. I want you to get in on the ground floor, before he makes any other new commitments."

Business, Josie! She forced herself to keep thinking. "You could arrange an appointment for me, Brad, for as soon as he wants to see anyone."

"I've got a better idea! The pater always comes home mellow. Seeing America again always softens him at the seams. So you're going to make your first big impression before his guards start going up again!"

"Tomorrow, Brad?" She frowned. "Well, if he won't be too tired."

"I'll drive him direct from the field to the Crystal Grotto. He's like a kid about their luncheon ice show. Well, sweet, you'll meet us there. You'll have to make him love you. He'll be your father-in-law one of these days, if *I* have anything to say about it!"

Josie smiled determinedly. "What type of gal shall I be for him?"

"Be dignified, demure and very, very impressed with Victor Sloane. That's

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how he likes a woman. The pater's one of those birds who never revises his first estimate of a person, so make it love at first sight!" Brad beamed on her dotingly, his dark eyes kindling with possessiveness.

They still were planning the strategy for that next day's luncheon when their waiter brought Brad his check. Everything was agreed upon by the time their down elevator deposited them once more at street level.

Brad suggested dropping her off in his cab, but Josie declined. She wanted to walk. It was a gilded shining day, and she felt a sudden attack of stage fright at the nearness of her big meeting. This man's custom could put her father's brokerage office firmly back on the map!

She had plenty to think about as she walked along. This afternoon, tomorrow, at the latest, she ought to get around to signing the partnership dissolution papers. Her lawyer had telephoned that they were waiting at his office. It was silly to dread that formality so. After all, the end of Neergaard & Wickware was *only* a formality. Everything else had been finished and done with, weeks ago. Everything but the official funeral.

At a drug store three blocks from the office, she paused briefly for a bromo to still the throbbing inside her head. She had to think clearly, during her afternoon appointments. And she mustn't let the little lines of pain bite too deep between her eyes, now or at luncheon tomorrow.

"That's right, kid. You couldn't tell the two stones apart, from any written description. Same weight. Same coloring. But what a difference!"

The harsh, furtive voice had sunk into her consciousness before Josie grew aware that she was listening to it. She half-turned in surprise. Her stool was the last in the row lining the soda fountain. Directly behind her stood a trio of public telephone booths. A man bent over the black instrument in the nearest one. His door was half-open, to let in cool air.

"This one I can get you to substitute for his is strictly a turkey, see? Heavy-frosted. A naat, anyway half of it. It's dirt cheap. The difference in the yields of this one and his could make us both rich."

Josie realized, then, why the words had impressed her. This was some sort of diamond deal that was being discussed. It was the familiar shop talk that had caught her. What was brewing didn't sound any too honest.

Then, just as she was setting down her glass, the booth door opened all the way and the man who had been talking walked out. She had to repress a visible start of surprise. The thin, sharp, nervous face. The long white scar. The patent-leather hair. The nervous gait and the loud plaid jacket. It might have been only yesterday that Mark Wickware had pointed out "Ice" MacDowell to his daughter. Prison, even, hadn't changed Ice.

He passed her without recognition. Josie watched him head for the street with a mixture of scorn and pity. Ice MacDowell was no good. But he had been punished for that, and he was an exile from the only world he knew—or so Jiggs Moseby had claimed. Funny. That conversation wouldn't indicate that Ice was out of the running. He seemed to be dealing in diamonds just as if nothing at all had happened to him, years ago.

CHAPTER IV

Frosted Lady

PROMPTLY at noon, next day, Josie slid open her desk drawer and drew from it the mad little volcano of artificial flowers which a smart Fifth Avenue shop had sold her as a hat. Tilted over her smoothly shining red hair, it gave her just the look Brad had prescribed for her meeting with his father. "Dignified, demure." This would knock Victor Sloane's left eye out or Josie would never again trust her estimate of millinery!

She was drawing on fresh white gloves as she passed Wanda's desk in the outer office. "I'm having lunch with Mr. Sloane and his father at the Crystal Grotto. Pray hard for me. I've just *got* to sell

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myself to him!"

"You will." Wanda's plain face lit with reassurance. "Good luck!"

All the way across town, Josie kept her fingers crossed tight. It was happening at last! The thing she had been dreaming of, so eagerly, while she waited for Lance to meet her at their park bench—that evening so many weeks ago! She was going to have her chance at selling the services of Neergaard & Wickware to the biggest jeweler on Park Avenue!

Her cab slithered up to the entrance of the Crystal Grotto exactly at twelve-thirty. Allowing for the delay in going through customs, Brad had felt certain he and his father would reach the famous mid-town restaurant not long after that. Her heart was hammering. Her throat felt dry as she paid off her driver and walked swiftly, desperately inside.

After the bright street the dimness of the interior seemed almost total dark. The big silvery circle of the ice gleamed faintly. Then as her eyes acclimated themselves, the tiers of close-crowded tables ringing the arena began to materialize. So did the softly glowing chandeliers.

"Madame wishes a table?" A slender waiter was at her elbow.

"I'm Miss Wickware." Josie smiled automatically. "I'm meeting a Mr. Sloane here for luncheon. I wonder if he's already asked for me?"

"Miss Wickware? No, Miss. But if you will be seated?"

She nodded and the suave servitor withdrew. She was in the very act of settling herself on one of the big velvet banquettes at the entrance to the dining room when a too-loud peal of giggles arrested her. The sudden, somewhat tipsy geyser of merriment drew her eyes like a magnet.

And then she had forgotten the banquette. She was frankly staring.

Angelica Garth and the sleek-looking young man who was with her had been given a table very close to the archway. Evidently, the management understood, as bistro managements somehow always understand, that the pretty niece of Elmer Garth was not privileged to dip into his fabulous pocket. And the man with her was obvious a gigolo, or little better. They had not been worth a choice location. Josie might have touched them.

"But I'm not always going to be a church mouse, no siree, no siree!" Angelica was talking too loudly. The empty cocktail glass at her place could not have held her first for the day. "You'll see, Henri!"

"Your uncle, then, he is about to settle something on his brother's orphan?" The young man was playing it for sympathy and tenderness. But Josie, at least, caught the greedy edge to his voice. "Ah, *Cherie!*"

"Uncle Elmer!" Angelica pouted. "*He* wouldn't give me the time of day!"

"But if not M'sieu Garth—who? This M'sieu Neergaard of whom I am so jealous that at night I do not shut my eyes? Has he, perhaps, promised?"

Angelica giggled again. "Lance would be shocked at the notion of any financial transaction with a girl he wasn't married to. Now, don't you get too curious, Henri. I won't tell you where the money's coming from!"

"But, *Cherie,* you should trust me—if you are my dear little dove."

She gave in with a maudlin little sigh. "Oh, all right! I never *could* keep secrets from you, darling. I'm inheriting it. It's the money from—from an annuity my own father bought me. And it's a *very* sweet sum."

"Miss Wickware?" The discreet, soft voice was at her side again. Josie wheeled, startled to realize she had been listening to a conversation which was none of her concern; yet unsure how she could have avoided hearing those two voices. The waiter stood beside her, smiling politely.

"A gentleman on the telephone, Miss. You may take it over there."

Josie's heart sank like a stone dropping through water as she went across the wide restaurant foyer toward the booth where a receiver was off its hook. What could have happened to Brad? Disappointment shook her. Probaby he wasn't going to be able to bring Victor Sloane here, after all the nerve-wracking hours of preparation she had gone through.

SHE picked up the receiver. "Hello? Brad? Is anything wrong?"

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"This isn't Mr. Sloane, Miss Josephine," a voice much slower and drier than Brad's lazily graceful drawl said in her ear. "It's Jiggs Moseby, Miss. I called your office. Miss Tuttle said where to reach you."

"Jiggs!" Relief swirled through her. "You'll never know how you terrified me! What is it? Have you the cutting report on my diamond?"

"No, Miss Josephine. That isn't ready. But I thought I ought to get in touch with you as fast as I could, Miss. It's about Mr. Neergaard."

Suddenly her hand was shaking so hard that it could barely cling to the receiver. Her voice choked wildly. "Has Lance been hurt?"

"Word seeped into my shop about half an hour back, Miss. It's all over the city, by now. Mr. Garth threw Mr. Neergaard out of his job, a little past ten o'clock. And he threatens to blackball him in the industry."

Each incredible word struck at her like a small, hard fist. "Blackball *Lance?* But that's only done when somebody does something dishonest." Her small chin lifted sharply. "Ridiculous! Lance is as honest as daylight."

"Of course he is, Miss Josephine. But he's in bad trouble now. The old curmudgeon—pardon, Mr. Garth—is raving like a wild man, they do tell me. He's accusing Mr. Lance of stealing a fine diamond and substituting a worthless stone of corresponding description. He vows the deal was a deliberate strop, with someone outside paying handsome for the goods."

Josie stared blankly at the ugly little instrument. A strop? That was diamond-talk for disaster; for a deal in which the man whose money had purchased a big stone or shipment was deliberately left out on a very long limb. Elmer Garth would have the hide of anyone who had stropped *him.*

Like a bit of jigsaw puzzle testing its place, a quick memory flashed through Josie's mind. That telephone booth, yesterday. Ice MacDowell's harsh voice. "That's right, kid. You couldn't tell the two stones apart. Same weight. Same coloring. But what a difference! This one I can get—"

As instantly as it had arisen, the vision faded. Lance Neergaard would not so much as have spoken to a chiseler like Ice MacDowell. It was only that the coincidence was overwhelming. To hear of two deals in one twenty-four hour period, with so many similar shady details to them, *was* strange.

"Where is Lance now, Jiggs? How can I find him?"

"I wouldn't know that, Miss Josephine. But he must be desperate. Mr. Garth is a top power in this business. He can see to it Mr. Lance starves before anyone else'd hire him. It means curtains for Mr. Lance."

"But it can't be true! Why should Elmer Garth think Lance would swindle him?"

"I wouldn't be knowing the details. But I heard the fine stone was in Mr. Garth's home, not at the office. No one but Mr. Lance knew that. So when the old man discovered a switch had been made, it pointed to the lad, you see. I thought you'd want to know about it, Miss Josephine."

Josie was moving like an automaton as she stepped out of the narrow booth and re-crossed the restaurant's grandiose foyer. The arch opened ahead of her. As she stepped through it, she realized dimly—from a burst of music, from a blare of gaudy lights—that the opening number of the lunchtime ice revue was already on. Three girls in brief ermine costumes were skimming over the silvery arena like snowbirds.

"Angelica!" That was her own voice, against the music. Josie realized with dull surprise that she had crossed to the table where a petite blonde and her escort sat staring upward. "Angelica, Lance is in trouble."

"Lance?" Angelica scowled sullenly. "I don't think I need his cast-off girl friend to tell me about Lance, thank you. Not after last night."

"This has happened since. Less than three hours ago. Your uncle thinks Lance pulled a crooked deal, and switched a naat for a good diamond."

The stricken look on Angelica's face made it seem naked, defenceless. Then a sullen guardedness replace it. The girl said, slowly, "Uncle Elmer accused Lance? And Lance didn't deny it? Then it's obviously true."

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"*True?* You know Lance couldn't steal! He loves you. You *must* know!"

Angelica twisted her red lips to a surly line. "My uncle, need I remind you, is one of the smartest men in the diamond business. If *he* says Lance is guilty, then he must be guilty. Miss Wickware, I wish you'd go away. This was a very pleasant luncheon until you put in an appearance."

FOR a stricken moment longer, Josie stood where she was. She had forgotten the very existance of the sleek young man named Henri, although the perfume of his hair oil scented the air too heavily. Her whole attention was riveted on the girl Lance had turned to for love and understanding.

"Don't you *care*, Angelica? Don't you care at all if he's in trouble?"

"Of course I care! Our names have been in print together so often, lately, that everyone who hears about this scandal is going to think of me, too, automatically. You don't suppose I relish the notion of all that sly, malicious gossip? Lance might have considered *me*, before he did it!"

Josie's eyes shot sherry-tinted sparks. The girl into whose lifted face she stared was pretty, smart, feminine. Yet suddenly she seemed to Josie like a frosted diamond. A heavy-frosted one, that never could polish into a truly pure stone. The flaws in her were more than skin flaws. Her grain was shoddy, flecked with pique, marred by gletz fissures down deep.

"I'm going to hunt for Lance, Angelica. Are you coming with me?"

"How dare you?" sobbed Angelica, suddenly furious. "How dare you try to entangle me in whatever despicable thing Lance Neergaard has done? I told you to go away! I told you to leave me alone!"

Josie paused no longer. She spun on a slim slipper heel and began to run between the tables in the direction of the main door.

Just as she reached the archway, two men coming in from the street stepped through it. One was tall, distinguished, snowy-haired. At his side, Brad Sloane was beaming assuredly. "Josie, sweet, this is my—"

Josie did not even pause in the desperate rush which carried her past them. As she crossed the outer foyer, she heard behind her the startled and resentful hiss of Victor Sloane's indrawn breath. She could all but feel the sharp, disapproving surprise of his gaze bore into her.

"The pater's one of those birds who never revises his first estimate," Brad had told her. And Victor Sloane wasn't loving her at first sight.

But for Josie, the Sloanes—father and son—had temporarily ceased to exist. She had to find Lance! He was alone and desperate, somewhere in this teeming city, and he needed a friend! Oh, she loved him so!

CHAPTER V

THE BLUE-WHITE HEART

EVENING shadows in the park were beginning to fall long and blue, by the time she came hurrying along the path to the bench she and Lance, years ago, in those school vacations, had solemnly decided to call theirs.

For frantic hours, she had hunted for him everywhere that there was the slightest reason to dare hope he might have gone. Everywhere.

She had tried his apartment, three times. She had checked back with Wanda hourly, in case he might have come back to the sanctuary of Neergaard & Wickware in his trouble. She had asked anguished questions of the doorman at his club; of Jiggs Moseby; even of the receptionist at the forbiddingly handsome offices of Garth, Inc. There was no lead left.

None except the bench in the park. And she had not really dared hope that she might find him there. There was no reason why he should have gone to a place with memories which must all be unpleasant for him, now.

As the bench hove in sight around the last bend in the path, Josie's heart leaped and then seemed to stop beating. A single figure sat there in the late

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sunlight, yellow head drooping dejectedly, wide shoulders set in a line of defeat which brought a stifled sob into her throat. She cried his name as she began to run toward him. "Lance! Lance!"

She had almost stumbled abreast of the bench before his own name registered on him. The bent head lifted. Eyes as blue and blank as bits of litmus paper met hers head on. Lance heaved to his feet mechanically.

"Playing hooky from work, Josie? *You?* It's still office hours."

She groped blindly for his muscular brown hands and clung to them. "I was at lunch when Jiggs called me. I've been searching for you ever since. Oh, Lance, are you—are you all right?"

His virile mouth twisted. "Sure! In the pink! You've heard, I gather?"

"Elmer Garth must be insane. You didn't switch any diamonds on him."

"Somebody did." Lance's voice was dreary. "You should have seen that lump of flaws that was in his chamois bag, instead of what belonged there!"

"He told me about the beautiful stone you'd bought," Josie whispered. "He was walking on air about it, and you were a genius and practically a junior partner. Oh, Lance, he *can't* believe that you stole from him!"

Lance was staring straight ahead. "If he'd sent his stone to the cutter without unwrapping it again for one last look, he might never have known. That's the ironic thing. Weight and size—even surface color—tallied incredibly. Nothing but chicken feed would have come away from the saw, and a description check in the post mortem would have convinced the old man that the stone I bought him was the one he'd manufactured."

"Only he *did* look. Is that what happened, Lance?"

"Elmer wanted to gloat over his bargain one last time." The tall man beside her nodded slowly. "And a baby could have seen the actual differences in the two pieces of goods. Elmer came to me howling for blood!"

Josie still clung to his hands. "But why to you, Lance?"

"Why not? I was the only one who knew the original's worth. I'd been in his house for dinner, giving me opportunity to pull the switch. Who else would he tap? One and one make two, where Elmer Garth is concerned."

She gasped again what she had said before. "But you didn't switch those stones, Lance Neergard. You wouldn't. You *couldn't.*"

"Thanks for the vote of confidence." Slowly, not ungently, Lance disengaged his hands from her trembling grasp. "But I'm afraid it can't do me much good now. I'm glad you shed your partner, Josie, before this business broke. The Neergaard name won't be smelling any too sweet."

Josie felt as though a heavy stone had rolled over her, crushing her heart. What was it Jiggs Moseby had said, the other day? "One crooked deal's enough to end a man in diamonds. If his good name's gone, he's finished." Truer words, she knew, had never been spoken.

Lance had asked a question, not expecting any answer. It came back to her like a bit of driftwood cast up by the moiling currents of emotion which flooded her beneath her desperately calm and normal surface. *Who else?* For, as he'd pointed out, *somebody* had pulled this switch and was even now waiting to reap the tidy profit accruing after the good diamond could be re-sold for the fancy price it should command.

Ice MacDowell's sly face flashed before her mind's eye, because that deal Ice had been arranging had sounded so oddly similar. But Josie shook her head regretfully. Ice hadn't had access to Elmer Garth's penthouse, where the diamond had been kept. Who, then? Who could *possibly* have made the switch?

"Angelica!" She gasped the name aloud before she realized she had thought it. "Angelica and her 'annuity!' I *knew* that had a phony ring! Her father was supposed to have been practically penniless, Lance!"

LANCE'S blue eyes came alive at that. For the first time, there was a glint in them as they flew to her lifted face —warily, even frightenedly. Then they were once more expressionless. He spoke in a careful, deliberate voice. "Angelica

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had nothing whatever to do with this, Josie."

"But of course she did! How else would she be coming into money? It was to *Angelica* I heard Ice MacDowell phoning, Lance! His plan was *this!*"

"I just told you, Josie," he said wearily. "Angelica had nothing to do with this." His lean face seemed so lost and hopeless it wrung her heart.

He was lying, of course. Josie knew to the core of her being that he was lying. The knowledge of why Lance was taking the blame, permitting his life and his career to be shattered by Elmer Garth's vengeful fury, seemed like a remorseless hand pressing her back into some quicksand pit of final despair. For a man would never shoulder a burden such as this for any girl he did not love with every nerve and sinew of his being!

Angelica had known, at the Crystal Grotto, that Lance was covering for her. That first flush of fear—that had been because the switch had been discovered. But the instant she learned that somebody else was taking the blame for it, she had made her decision. She had abandoned Lance to his fate without so much as a backward glance. Dear little Angelica!

Josie's lips stirred into a bitter travesty of a smile. She knew what she was going to do now. It was the only thing she *could* do for him.

"Have it your own way, Lance. The reason I was looking for you was—" the invention did not come easily—"that our partnership dissolution papers will be sent up to the office for signing before closing time. I was afraid you might be leaving town. They'll need your signature, as well as mine, to wind things up. I thought you might wait at the office—"

The blue eyes were absolutely blank again. "Sure. Why not, Josie?"

She left him at the office, with Wanda. As she explained, their old friend Rackowe had offered her first chance at a series just imported as part of the latest shipment of the London Syndicate. She had an appointment to see them at five o'clock sharp, if Lance didn't mind? The lonely set of his face as he nodded drove deep into her heart. But she knew she could count on his keeping his promise to wait for the expected papers.

Actually, she went no farther than the big hotel on the next corner. First she broke a quarter into nickels at the news stand. Then she waited for a free booth in the line of telephone cubicles.

HER first call was to Jiggs Moseby's familiar number. But this was only to find out if Jiggs knew where Ice MacDowell was living, now he was out of jail. Jiggs was an almost legendary clearing-house for information in the diamond trade. As she had prayed, he possessed the needed facts.

From its exchange, she suspected that the cheap hotel she called next could not be far from the Times Square sector. The caliber of the whining voice at its desk corroborated this. A moment later, another voice—harsh, low-pitched, just as she'd remembered it—was answering.

"Ice?" She made her own voice a blurred murmur, praying desperately that on the telephone it would fool him. "This is you-know-who. I'm getting scared, Ice. Uncle Elmer's fired Lance Neergaard for the switch."

A low growl interrupted. "Didn't I tell you to hang onto your nerve, kid? They can't prove you put the naat I got for you in place of that blue stone. Neergaard won't talk. We'll clean up, both of us."

Her heart leaped crazily. It was working! "But, Ice, suppose—?"

"I told you, hang onto your nerve! It was a dirty break the old skinflint had to look at the goods before he turned it over. There'd have been no chance he'd have wised up. A bad yield is a risk anybody takes with a diamond, and the descriptions dovetailed. But since he did find out, hold tight."

This time, Josie spoke up loud and clear. She used what Lance, in the old days, had made fun of as her "Madam Executive" voice. "This is all very interesting, Mr. MacDowell. I figured it happened this way."

An explosive silence broke swiftly, far away. "What? *Who is this?*"

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"Josephine Wickware, Mr. MacDowell. I'm calling from my office, and I have a disinterested witness on the extension line listening in. He has overheard every word. Your deal seems to have backfired, Mr. MacDowell."

Ice realized that, too. "Look here—don't hang up—listen, lady!"

"I hadn't planned to hang up. I have a deal to make with you." She was mutely grateful he could not see her. She sounded firm enough. But her knees were weak, her hand was trembling and there were tears of sheer nervous panic streaking her cheeks. "You'd be a second-time loser, Mr. MacDowell, if the police moved in on this. I'm giving you a chance to prevent that. Give Angelica back the good stone. Make her return it."

"Return it? How can I do that? I don't even know where she is!"

"That is something you'll have to find out, Mr. MacDowell. She was lunching at the Crystal Grotto with a snake she called Henri. You'll have to trace her from there. And I can only give you until six o'clock."

"But that's only an hour! Have a heart, lady! I was desperate."

"Six o'clock," Josie repeated grimly. "If Mr. Garth has not called my office by then, to report the return of his property, I'll take my impartial witness to the police. I'm really being generous, Mr. MacDowell." The receiver clattered as she dropped it into its cradle. She leaned her forehead against the wall in front of her, and sobbed and sobbed.

THE last trace of a tear had been expertly removed before she opened the familiar door of Neergaard & Wickware once more. The door to the inner office. Wanda nodded in answer to Josie's look. As she moved on in, Mark Wickware's daughter could see the tall, strong figure slouched at the corner desk which had stood empty all these frustrated, bleak weeks.

"That messenger from the lawyer's hasn't come yet. Maybe he won't show."

"He'll be here," said Josie swiftly. "Please wait, Lance."

The wide shoulders shrugged. "There's no place else I have to go. It was savvy of you to track me down today, Josie. I probably *will* leave town, just as you said. There's nothing for me in New York, now."

She isn't worth it, Lance! Josie's torn heart cried out the words—but silently, miserably. Aloud, and calmly, she said, "At least your ex-boss hasn't set the cops on your trail, Lance. That's something."

"Garth knows he has nothing to take the police. Only he and I saw the stone, after I'd bought it for him. I paid a steal price, so the inventory wouldn't prove he'd lost something far more valuable than the naat. No, he had no proof a switch had been made. But he knew. And I knew."

Josie sounded casual. "What about *before* the stone was purchased? Is it possible some outsider saw it, knew the deal, and cooked up a scheme?"

"Plenty of outsiders saw it. I was offered my crack at it at the Club, at lunchtime. I remember, because a fellow who'd been convicted of skulduggery years ago and was newly out again—fellow by the name of MacDowell—had just appeared there for his meal, and the rest of the boys gave him such a cold shoulder I felt sorry for him. We talked a little."

The last bit of the picture fitted snugly into place. Ice had learned of the purchase then. Knowing it was for Garth, he had hunted up Garth's pretty niece. It couldn't have taken much to sell her his smart idea. Angelica obviously had been bitter because Uncle hung onto his money.

"Almost six," Lance said, restlessly. "You'd better phone your lawyer, Josie. There must be some hitch in his delivery."

A telephone bell buzzed sharply. Lance stared in startled surprise at the extension on his desk. It buzzed again, unmistakably *his* desk.

"Wanda must have her switchboard fouled up. Nobody'd call me here." But he reached out for the receiver and said "Hello?" Watching him, Josie found herself mumbling an old childhood prayer she'd thought was forgotten. "Dear Lord . . ." it began, humbly and earnestly. The rest of it was "*Please!*"

Lance was speaking rapidly. "*Found* it, sir? But how could it have gotten in

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your desk drawer? . . . Oh! . . . Oh, I see! Angelica admitted she'd switched stones, just to see if we really did know rough diamonds apart. Yes, sir, I remember she always swore they all looked alike to her . . ." The next pause was longer. "Come back to work? I—I'll have to sleep on that, Mr. Garth . . . Yes, I understand, a junior partner . . . I'll let you know."

He hung up slowly. His face was the face of a man who has just heard heavenly voices singing. "Josie!" he gasped. "I've been cleared, Josie!"

"I gather Angelica decided to return her little trinket, Lance?"

The golden head nodded happily. "She didn't realize what she was doing, poor kid. It sounds dopey. Even I—thought she'd meant to steal it."

"And yet—" Josie swallowed painfully—"you covered for her."

"She's so young, Josie. She's led a miserable, cramped, empty life of poverty and deprivation. And Elmer gives her nothing but her food and room and the clothes on her back. I almost could understand *why* she'd steal!"

Other girls, Josie might have pointed out, were handed less than that for free. Other girls *earned* their food and room and clothes—and whatever else they had. But she would not hurt Lance by pointing that out.

"The minute she heard I was in trouble, though, she faced the old sourpuss with the whole story. He was falling over his feet just now, to me. But he must have raised the roof with her. It took courage to face him."

Josie's heart had knotted into a tight, hard ball. Angelica's sullen face, at the Crystal Grotto, rose up before her. Even before she knew the switch was discovered, she had two-timed Lance with that Henri. And now what?

"Congratulations, Lance. On the new partnership. And on—on *her*."

HE ROUNDED his desk and strode toward her. His face was serious once more, although the hopeless look had gone. "Thanks. But I'm not taking it, Josie. I only pretended to be considering it to keep Garth as calm as possible with Angelica. I've been doing a lot of thinking today. And that set-up was no good. Hanging around New York—eating my heart out for you? What kind of life is that? I'm still leaving town. Tomorrow."

She couldn't have heard him correctly. "Eating your heart out for—for *me?*"

"Who else? I've always loved you. You know that." He was standing very close now. His blue gaze held hers. "Since you don't feel the same, I'm moving elsewhere."

"But it's *Angelica* you love! All those column items! And—and—"

"Angelica's a sweet kid. A loyal kid. But she's not you, Josie. Oh, I tried to rush her. I tried to fall in love with her. I tried my level best to forget you. But it was no dice. Never for one single hour." His deep voice broke. "So I'll sign out, as soon as that messenger arrives with the papers."

"Lance! There isn't any messenger coming! There are no papers! Oh, Lance, I never could really have gone through with it—breaking us up."

FOR an instant, his face was blank. "No papers? Then why did you ask me here?" Suddenly a white grin broke across the bronzed features above her. He glanced toward his extension telephone and back. "*Now* I get it! You knew he'd call here, hunting for me! And you knew he was *going* to call because it was you who'd talked with Angelica and told her I was in a jam!" Suddenly, ardently, his arms were around her. "Josie! You do love me!"

She was clinging to him so hard, and sobbing such violent sobs of happiness and relief, that it would have been ridiculous to deny Lance's statement. There were things about what had happened that he probably never would know. But he knew the most important things. And so did she.

"Neergard & Wickware!" His voice all but sang it. His lips began coming downward, downward, until they were over her own; eager, waiting.

"Neergaard & Neergaard!" Josie corrected tremulously. "Oh, Lance, as soon as we can find a preacher, let's make it Neergaard & Neergaard!" Then just as his hard, firm mouth took hers, she added one last whispered word. "*Forever!*"

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Share My Dreams

A Complete Novelet

by ANN ARDEN

CHAPTER I

Lost Pooch

WHEN TOBY PRESTON awoke that morning to find the sunlight streaming in the window of her bedroom, she had no idea that this day would be any different from all the other work days of the week. She yawned as usual, sat up so that a lock of her auburn hair fell in her eyes—as usual—and stumbled to close the window. All according to custom. Nothing out of the ordinary.

But when she reached the window and her still sleepy fingers found the handles, she paused. She had heard something.

It was one of those indefinable noises which could have come from anything at all. It was a whine, sort of, Toby reflected. But a whine from what?

"You're still asleep," she decided, and prepared to close the window. She heard the noise again. And this time she knew she was awake.

She shook herself conscious and drew on her blue flannel robe hastily. As she stepped out in the hall her mother ap-

It's a Case of "Love Me, Love My Dog" When

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"He's a Framingham retriever," Bruce answered Toby's question

peared from her room room. "Hi, Mom," Toby asked. "Did you hear it too?"

"Hear what, dear?" Mrs. Preston answered.

"I don't know. That's what I'm going to investigate."

"But what on earth—do you mean a burglar?"

Toby laughed. "You won't find burglars operating at seven o'clock on a bright, sunshiny morning. At least, I don't think you will. But we'll soon find out."

She opened the black door, where she thought the sound had come from. Nothing there. But the whine reached her ears again, and she scurried around

Toby Finds Her Own Heart Playing Tricks!

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the house to the front—And stopped short!

Two eyes met her own. They were browner than Toby's, and much more soulful. They peered at Toby from either side of a long, pointed black nose. The owner of the eyes and nose also had ears. They were very long ears. He also had long legs, but even these seemed short in comparison with the ears.

The individual also had a tail. "Well, slice me up and call me Peaches," Toby said. "A pup!" And at the sound of friendship in the human voice, the tail went into violent action. While Toby was still blinking, the dog planted muddy forepaws on the blue flannel robe, which promptly became a combination of blue and brown.

"Hey there, fella," Toby said, petting the pup with enthusiasm. "So you're the character who woke me up, are you?"

"*Rowoo,*" said the dog, giving Toby's snub nose an affectionate smack.

"Rowoo yourself," Toby jokingly remarked, running her hands through the thick brown fur. "You're quite a handsome specimen, you know it?"

"*Poof,*" said the dog.

CAUTIOUSLY, the front door opened. "Was that it?" Mom inquired.

"That was it," Toby said.

"He's not from around here," Mom declared. "He's bigger than any of our neighborhood products. Wonder where he came from?"

Toby searched for a tag or a collar and found neither. "No identification," she reported. "He must be lost."

"Well, don't just stand there," Mom said. "Invite the gentleman in and give him some breakfast."

Toby obeyed happily. The pup followed her in through the open door, sniffed critically at the chair legs and the radio and whined his approval. He also apparently approved of the breakfast Toby fixed for him, lapping it up with noisy gusto.

Toby and Mom smiled down at him as they drank their coffee.

"Has the paper come yet?" Mom asked.

"Uh-huh," Toby replied.

"Have a look in the 'lost and found'. You're answer is probably there."

"Uh-huh," Toby said, looking at the dog.

"Now quit it," Mom said sternly. "I know he's cute, and I like him as much as you do. But some child is probably heartbroken wondering where he is."

"You're right," Toby said, getting the paper and returning to the breakfast table with it. "I'll be a good girl."

Her forehead creased with concentration as she pored through the day's crop of lost and found ads. "Here it is," she said at length. "Brown coat, eight months old, stands about eighteen inches—"

"Who does he belong to?" Mom said.

"Let's see. Finder please return to—" It ended in a wheeze.

"Now what?"

Toby began to laugh. She laughed until tears streamed down her face. At last Mom took the newspaper from her weak hands and planked it firmly on the table.

"I'm not a mind reader," she said. "I demand to know what's so funny."

Toby controled herself. "It isn't really funny, I guess. It just struck me that way. You were talking about a heartbroken child worrying about his little pupsy-wupsy. You know who the poor, little heartbroken infant is?"

"Who?"

"Bruce Thorndike!"

Mom gasped. "No!"

"Yes!" Toby looked at the contented stranger, now peacefully curled up on the rug, and began to laugh again. "So one of young Mr. Bruce Thorndike's prize dogs has broken loose into the outside world. My my. What a comedown."

"That's unfair," Mom said. "I've heard he's a very nice young chap. What are you going to do about it?"

"Take the pooch home on my way to work," Toby said. "Heartbroken child or not, the man still wants his dog back."

An hour later the flannel robe had given way to an eye-filling little print dress, with flowers chasing each other around on it. The auburn hair floated contentedly about her shoulders now, and sun's rays bounced off of it like firelight from a copper kettle.

Toby kissed Mom good-bye, coaxed

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the furry visitor into the back of her ancient jalopy and set out for the Thorndike estate. Finding it, of course, was something anybody in town could do blindfolded. It fact, it was hard to drive a car for ten minutes in any direction without hitting some portion of the rolling Thorndike property.

Nobody knew much about Bruce Thorndike except that he was the only son of a father who had dipped into the chemical industry and come up with a fortune. It was known that Bruce himself worked in the city in one of the big brokerage houses, that he had played some football at Yale, and that he was unmarried. Oh, yes, and also his hobby was raising pedigreed dogs. Beyond that point he was an unknown quantity.

"And as far as I'm concerned, he can stay that way," Toby thought to herself, as she swung off the main road into the private driveway leading to the Thorndike home.

But it was hard not to be impressed with the beauty of the huge estate, or the sweep of the spreading tree-shaded lawns which looked like vast putting greens on a golf course. And even if she didn't care a hoot what Bruce Thorndike thought of her, she still felt pretty silly when her battered car wheezed to a halt under the portico and an imposing person who looked like a senator came down the steps.

"Good morning, Miss," he said politely. "May I help you?"

"I want to see Mr. Thorndike," Toby said. "Bruce Thorndike," she added hastily, suddenly horrified at the thought of having old man Chemical himself waddle out to meet her.

"Who shall I say is calling?"

"My name is Toby Preston, but that wouldn't mean anything to him. Tell him it's in reference to his notice in the paper about a lost dog."

"I'll be glad to," said the senator, and disappeared.

LEISURELY, Toby got out of the car and stood with hands on her slim hips as she gazed around. No doubt about it, if you had this kind of money to throw into a place to live, the Thorndikes had certainly done themselves proud. It was pretentious, sure. Awe-inspiring might be the word, especially to someone down in Toby's bracket. But for all its magnitude, the place was homey. Toby would have loved nothing better than to take a running jump and dive into some of that cool, green grass.

"In a bathing suit," she added aloud.

"Who's in a bathing suit?" a voice said behind her.

She spun around and almost lost her balance. "Nobody," she stammered. "I mean, me. I mean—

"Don't apologize," the man said. "Whatever you were talking about, it still sounds like a fine idea."

He was somewhere in his middle twenties, Toby guessed, and he had a grin which was exceedingly pleasant indeed. He was wearing brown trousers, probably part of a business suit, but the coat was still inside on its hook and the clean white shirt was open at the collar. There was a pipe too, a pipe which didn't smell nearly as vile as many Toby had run across in her time.

"Are you Bruce Thorndike?" she asked, deciding that a businesslike approach was called for.

"That's right."

"I saw your notice in the morning paper about a lost pooch. I found him on our doorstep." She opened the back door of the car and the dog bounded out, giving Bruce Thorndike the same wet nose greeting Toby had received earlier.

"Hiya, kid," Bruce said, playing with the pup. "Hiya old stuff, old thing, old fleabag. You say he was hanging around your place, Miss Preston?"

"Yes," Toby said, wondering why she was finding it increasingly difficult to keep her mind on what she was saying. "We knew it didn't belong to anybody in our neighborhood—"

"We?"

"My mother and I," Toby said, noticing that Bruce's eyes flashed to her ringless left hand and then quickly away again. "As I was saying, the pup was a stranger to us, so we took a stab at the lost and found, and there he was."

"Swell," Bruce said, running his hands through the thick hair around the dog's neck. "Mighty nice of you to bring him back."

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"No trouble. What's his name?"

"His name?" Bruce said. "Well, he's registered under a complicated name, but we call him Fishface for short."

"Fishface!" Toby smiled. "How charming."

"Named after an aunt of mine," Bruce grinned. "You look like a dog lover yourself."

"Definitely," Toby said. "We don't keep one ourselves because Mom and I are both out all day and it wouldn't be fair to the animal. But I'm nuts about them. All the strays in town know our place as a sure-fire free meal. It's sort of like being on a canine sucker list."

Bruce laughed heartily, and all of a sudden Tony didn't feel awkward any more. Why, this lad was all right! He was no stuffed shirt, not by a darned sight!

"What kind is he, anyway?" she asked, reluctant to pull herself away and get to work, as she knew she should do.

"What kind?" Bruce repeated. "He's a Framingham Retriever."

"Never heard of it," Toby said. "But then, I never heard of most of the snazzy breeds."

BRUCE seemed to be thinking. "Funny why I should have trouble bringing this up, but it's only fair that I should. I mentioned a reward in my notice."

"Forget it," Toby said promptly. "That wasn't the idea."

"I thought so," he said relieved. "Thanks. I was afraid of hurting your feelings, but I did mention the thing—"

"Tell you what I'll let you do, if you want to pay me back."

"Name it."

"I'd love to see where you raise these fabulous dogs everybody talks about."

"The kennels?" His face lightened up. "I should say so. Come ahead. Golly, I'd have dragged you out there in chains if I had thought you were even the least interested."

She followed him around in back of the huge house to a series of kennels and fenced-in enclosures. Fishface followed obediently, then deserted the humans and raced to bark eagerly at the other dogs, who replied in kind.

CHAPTER II

ONE OF THE NICEST EVENINGS

TOBY was staggered at the elaborateness of the setup. There were enough dogs of every description to fill a city. They were all barking in a discordant chorus and they all seemed to love Bruce, leaping up the wires of their enclosure in efforts to reach him.

"Sure, I'm nuts about dogs," Bruce said. "Maybe you don't know much about my family history, but my Dad was broke as a light bulb when I was a brat. Like all other kids, I used to dream of what I'd do if I ever had some money. My dreams always used to get back to raising dogs. So one day Dad woke up with a four leaf clover in his mouth, and all of a sudden we were out of the red. Most important, that meant I could go to college. The only other thing it meant to me was that I could cut loose and do all the dog-raising I had thought about as a kid."

It was a long speech, and he stopped it abruptly when he finished. Toby was growing more amazed by the minute. Bruce's honesty about his family, his lack of pretention, his still being a regular person in spite of having a fortune to play around with.

"And you have a job too," she said half to herself.

Bruce chuckled. "Are you kidding? Sure I have a job. The dogs are just a hobby. Matter of fact, I'd better be getting on the ball if I don't want to miss the eight-seventeen into the city."

"Don't let me hold you up," Toby said hastily.

"No, wait a minute." She turned. He seemed unwilling to let her go. "Why can't we get together some time?" he said. "I mean, now that the dog's home, does that mean we can't see each other?"

Toby's pulse began to race. "Well, I suppose not—"

"I'll be back by six tonight," Bruce

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said. "Why don't we have dinner together?"

Wow! This boy didn't waste much time! "I don't think I could make it tonight, Bruce. Thanks just the same."

"Tomorrow night, then. No kidding, Toby, we've got a million things to talk over. Things like dogs, and bathing suits—"

"Bathing suits!" she answered, laughing. "This is where I came in. All right, Bruce, if you want. Tomorrow night it is."

"Wonderful!" he enthused, and there was no doubting that he was pleased. "Where shall I pick you up?"

"At the office, I guess. We're working pretty late these days."

"What office?" He pulled out a notebook and pencil.

"The Branch Cathcart Real Estate Agency."

"Oh sure," Bruce said, putting the notebook back without writing anything. "I know where you are. Matter of fact, I've talked to Cathcart once or twice recently. He's behind this new Oak Hills development."

Toby didn't stop to ponder what that was all about. She was too busy trying to make herself believe that this wonderful, handsome, cuddly gentleman was actually asking her for a date.

"Tomorrow night," Bruce called to her as she drove away in a delightful fog. "Don't forget."

"I won't," she called back. And then her breath escaped in a long whoosh. Forget a date with Bruce Thorndike? Fantastic idea!

She floated into the office a few minutes later. Mr. Cathcart was already there, closeted with a client. The other agents drifted in as the morning progressed, and among them came Clyde Marcy.

Clyde was blond and slender and exceedingly attractive. He wasn't as tall as Bruce or as rangy in build. Where Bruce was a fairly good-sized man, Clyde was more the wiry type. The gray flannel slacks and tan tweed coat he was wearing this morning fitted him to absolute perfection.

"Morning, Toby," he smiled, stopping at her desk. "How goes?"

"Goes good," she said. Her phone buzzed and she plugged it in. "Mr. Cathcart? Who's calling please?" More plugging, a few words with the boss, and she made the connection.

"Our date for tonight still stand?" Clyde inquired.

"By me it does." And she added, "I met a very interesting man this morning. I'll tell you all about it tonight."

Clyde had been about to turn away, but now he looked back. "Interesting man? Who?"

"I'll tell you," she teased.

"Anybody I know?"

"Nobody important. Hang on till tonight. I just mentioned it as a gag. It really doesn't mean a thing."

"I'd like to believe that," Clyde said, with a smile which wasn't really a smile at all.

SHE was a little sorry now that she had mentioned the episode to Clyde. Knowing how Clyde felt about her, she realized that she was being a little cruel to tease him that way, though she hadn't intended any such thing at all.

Clyde was a wonderful person, and she knew she was plenty lucky to have him love her as much as he did. She had asked herself a thousand times why she shouldn't just accept his proposals and stop worrying about whether she really loved him the same way. Goodness knows he would do anything in the world to make her happy.

But somehow the spark had just never been strong enough. Every time Clyde had tried to pin her down and get a definite yes from her, the right words hadn't come out. She knew she was fond of Clyde, very fond of him. Maybe she was in love with him and just didn't have enough sense to know it. Nevertheless, whatever the reason, things were still very much on the unsettled side between Clyde and herself.

"One of these days," Mom had chided her, "you're going to wake up and find you've lost him. Nobody that handsome and charming is going to sit around forever just waiting for you to make up your mind."

"Stop trying to marry me off," Toby had replied, kissing Mom on the cheek. "You'll get rid of me soon enough."

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But she knew that Mom had a point. There were plenty of other girls around town who would have cheerfully stepped into Toby's shoes at any moment Toby cared to step out of them. Toby told herself she was playing with fire. She told herself she was being a silly, romantic dope. But she still put off giving Clyde the answer he wanted.

When they left the office that evening, Clyde took her to the Pine Room at the town's one first class hotel, where a small orchestra dispensed dance music which was surprisingly good. They had a cocktail and ordered dinner. And it was then that Clyde brought the subject around to Toby's tantalizer of that morning.

"Don't ask me why I didn't wring your neck," Clyde said. "If there's one thing I hate it's riddles. Especially when they concern you and some male. Who was it you met? You promised to tell me tonight."

"I must have made it sound too important," Toby smiled. "And it wasn't at all. It was more amusing than anything else."

"Let me be the judge of that," Clyde said. "Make with the information."

"It was Bruce Thorndike," Toby said.

The reaction was instantaneous. "Bruce Thorndike! How on earth did you meet him?"

She looked at him quizically. "Is it so astounding that I should run across the famous Mr. Thorndike?"

He flushed. "You know I didn't mean it that way—"

"Sure I do," she said, patting his hand where it rested on the table. "I was just teasing again. Here's the story, if you really want to know." And she told him about finding Fishface on her doorstep, and how she had returned the dog to the Thorndike kennels.

"Bruce is really a nice kid," she concluded. "I was surprised. He seemed to be just as natural and full of fun as—well, as you are."

"That's a doubtful compliment," Clyde said wryly. "And I'm not too sure I like it."

"I don't get you."

His eyes met hers. "I'm glad if you found Bruce Thorndike a nice boy. We haven't had that same experience here at the office."

"The office," she said mystified. "Bruce did say some thing about talking to Mr. Cathcart. Something in respect to Oak Hills."

Clyde nodded. "That's about right, except that Mr. Cathcart was the one who did most of the talking. Your friend Bruce confined his end of the conversation to one word: No."

"I still don't understand," Toby said. "What's it all about, anyway?"

"The Oak Hills development that we're backing adjoins part of the Thorndike estate," Clyde explained. "Mr. Cathcart wants more land, wants to stretch out further than he had originally intended. Old man Thorndike leaves decisions like that to Bruce, now that he's retired from the business world himself. And friend Bruce won't play ball."

"But why not?"

"I wish I knew. So does Mr. Cathcart. It would make things simpler for a lot of people."

She frowned. "He must have reasons."

"I don't doubt that he has. His own personal reasons. All I know is that this is a heck of a time to get squeamish about land for houses to be built on, when the housing set-up is still so tight."

That made sense, Toby agreed reluctantly. It was a disturbing thought, for Bruce had seemed to be such a nice person, not at all the sort to take an unreasonable stand like that.

DURING the balance of the evening she proceeded to put Bruce Thorndike out of her mind completely. It was a very simple thing to do, for Clyde turned on the charm full blast, and he had plenty to turn on. He and Toby danced the evening hours away and by the time Clyde took her home she was in a wonderful frame of mind.

"One of the nicest evenings of my life," she murmured as Clyde's car glided to a halt. "Once of the very nicest."

"What do you attribute that to?" Clyde asked. "The music, the atmosphere—or the company?"

"A little bit of all three," Toby said looking at him. "But most especially the company."

"The company is very much in love

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with you, you know," Clyde said, and his voice was suddenly husky with emotion.

They looked at each other for a breathless, expectant moment. Then Toby's eyes closed and she felt herself drawn into Clyde's embrace. His lips caressed her eyes, her cheeks, her hair. Then they found her lips and clung with all the hunger of the love which he felt for her.

"Do you approve of the sample?" Clyde whispered.

"I always approve of that kind of sample," Toby replied.

"You could get a lifetime supply just for the asking."

She opened her eyes and sighed. "You tempt me strangely, Mr. Marcy. You always have."

"I get it," Clyde said. "Same answer as always. You can't think of anything in the world which sounds nicer than being married to me. But you still won't give in and actually do it."

"Aw gee, honey, don't put it that way—"

"Sorry," he said, and opened the car door. "Oh well. At least I'm still in the race." And he added sardonically: "Or should I call it a rat race?"

CHAPTER III

GLORIOUS DATE!

AFTER she went to bed that night, Toby was unhappy. She hated to hurt Clyde that way, and yet the only alternative was to stop having dates with him altogether. She didn't want to do that either. She enjoyed Clyde's company. And for all she knew, she still might wake up some bright morning and decide she wanted to marry him—provided he was still interested. It was always possible, of course, that he might have changed his mind by then. That was a chance she was taking, and she knew it.

But as the following work day drew to a close, her thoughts turned to the evening ahead. It was a very pleasant prospect to contemplate. She didn't have the faintest idea what the date with Bruce Thorndike would bring forth, but she was as eager as a schoolgirl to find out.

She was glad when the rest of the office force left early. Mr. Cathcart himself was the last to go. "Aren't you knocking off, Toby?" he asked from the front door.

"I'm waiting for a date," Toby explained. "He said he'd pick me up here."

"I see. Be sure and lock up." And he was gone, leaving her there alone.

Toby watched the wall clock climb toward the six o'clock mark with growing impatience. The clock clicked six on the button, but there was no sign of Bruce. Six five—Six ten—

"Say, what is this!" she fumed, beginning to pace the floor. "Am I being given the well known run-around?" But at that point the front door opened and she sighed with relief. It was Bruce.

"I'm awful sorry I'm late," he apologized. "But the train was held up in the yards, and just got here five minutes ago."

"That's all right, Bruce," she said, noting again the same tingle which had sped through her yesterday when she had first looked at him. "Those things happen."

"All set to go?"

"Ready and waiting."

"That's the way I like to hear the gal talk," he grinned, and took her arm. The touch of his fingers made the tingling increase like a triple charge of electricity. Say, what was going on here anyhow? Talk to the man for twenty minutes, and find herself doing nip-ups the very next time she sees him!

But whatever was going on, it was decidedly pleasant, Toby admitted. And the Colonial Club on the outskirts of town, where Bruce took her for dinner, was equally pleasant. It was a gorgeous place done in rustic style, and the food served on the spacious glassed-in terrace was nothing short of divine.

Bruce himself was grand company. As the evening flew past he and Toby found themselves laughing and kidding together as though they had been friends for years.

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"How's Fishface?" Toby inquired at one stage.

"Swell," Bruce said. "He's got a wonderful deep voice, you know. The gang starts howling sometimes, and Fishface is right in there. He's the John Charles Thomas of the Thorndike kennels."

Toby laughed. "I'm glad he came to our place. And that I saw your ad."

"So am I," Bruce said.

The vehemence with which he said it made her turn away in happy confusion. Was it possible, she asked herself, that he might be having an attack of the tingles himself? Was that too much to dream about?

She looked back at him, but now he was staring past her. He rose, and again there was a smile on his powerful face. But it was a different sort of smile now. Better or worse Toby couldn't tell. But different.

"Greetings, Hollace," she heard him say, and turned. A tall brunette was standing there, escorted by a nondescript boy who could have been anywhere from seventeen to thirty. The brunette had straight, onyx-black hair which swept down in glamorous splendor. The hair outlined a face of cameo perfection, set off by lips that were a shade too red. Undoubtedly the girl was beautiful. But whether the over-dramatic make-up job helped that beauty or hurt it, Toby wasn't so sure.

Bruce was speaking again. "Hollace, I'd like to have you meet Toby Preston. Toby, this is an old friend of mine—Hollace Stuyvesant."

The brunette introduced the nondescript boy in an offhand manner which indicated pretty clearly that he didn't count for much in Hollace's scheme of things. On the contrary, Hollace was warming up in no uncertain terms. But the person she was warming up to was Bruce!

"I'd ask you two to join us," Bruce said, "except that we're on our way out."

"Of course," Hollace said, giving Toby a look which made her wince. "I understand perfectly." Once more the charm was turned on Bruce like the rays of a sunlamp. "But do call me tomorrow, won't you, darling? It's been simply ages since I've seen you."

"All of four nights," Bruce laughed. "Sure, I'll call you."

GLIDING along the highway, Bruce broke the silence. "Holly is a swell kid," he told Toby, as he steered the car in the direction of town. "Seems like we've known each other forever."

"I can imagine," Toby said, still burning from the contemptuous look Hollace had tossed her way, a look which she had carefully hidden from Bruce.

"Are you in a hurry to get home?" he asked.

"Not particularly. Why?"

"That's all I wanted to know. Just relax and leave things to me."

She looked at him in the darkness. "Is that good advice?"

"Excellent advice."

"You mean you can be trusted?"

"Ouch!" Bruce said. "That's the worst insult a self-respecting male can get. But," he sighed, "I'm afraid you're right. Yes, I can be trusted."

"And that," Toby answered as she laughed, "is all I wanted to know."

She still couldn't imagine where they were heading, however. At first she thought Bruce was taking her back to his own house, for they did enter the Thorndike estate. But they turned off the main drive and kept going. And suddenly the broad waters of the river lay spread before them, sparkling like a princess gown in the soft moonlight.

"Oh, I know where we are," Toby said with sudden recognition. "This is the waterfront property Mr. Cathcart is trying to buy from you folks."

"That's right," Bruce said. "The Oak Hills development line runs right to here." His toe traced a mark in the grass. "Want to take a boat ride?"

"A boat ride! Tonight?"

"Sure," Bruce said. "That's what I've been building up to."

"I get it now," Toby said mischievously. "Handsome heel lures innocent young thing on to his private yacht—"

"The only part of that I wouldn't dispute is my being a heel," Bruce chuckled. "Shall we go?"

"We most certainly shall," she said eagerly, and Bruce led her along a winding path to the tiny boathouse which nestled at the water's edge. A few min-

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utes later they were speeding over the surface of the river, the powerful motors of the speedboat roaring a symphony of excitement and romance.

By the time Toby finally said goodnight to Bruce a couple of hours later, she knew that she was falling desperately in love with him. It was incredible, she told herself as she watched Bruce's sleek car disappear into the night. It made no sense at all to let herself go so completely blooie over any man on just one date.

But that was just the trouble, she confessed to her secret heart as she got ready for bed. Letting herself go wasn't the true picture of what had happened to her at all. She could have fought against this wonderful thing all she wanted to—and it wouldn't have done the slightest bit of good!

"Watch your step, kid," she muttered, waggling a stern finger at the frowning girl who looked back at her out of her mirror. "Love is a headache any time. When it concerns a boy like Bruce Thorndike, it can be darned near an epidemic!"

But the warning didn't keep her from lying awake for hours, thinking back over the heavenly evening with Bruce, drawing mental pictures of the firm set of his chin and the way he combed his dark hair!

She wouldn't have had the heart to talk about Bruce to Clyde the next night, when she and Clyde were together again, except that Clyde himself brought the subject up. "I'd like to know," he said. "Don't feel that you're twisting the knife blade. I'm asking for it."

INASMUCH as he had asked for it, she was honest with him. She admitted that the date with Bruce had been glorious from beginning to end. Clyde listened intently, saying nothing. But when she mentioned the meeting with Hollace Stuyvesant, he nodded knowingly, and Toby's voice trailed away.

"That mean something to you?" she asked.

"Sure," Clyde said. "I was wondering when you'd get hep to the Stuyvesant deal."

"It's no deal," Toby began, but then she could go no further. How did she know whether it was a deal or not? She didn't really know a thing about Hollace Stuyvesant herself, let alone the set-up between her and Bruce.

Apparently Clyde, however, did know. "They're supposed to be engaged, in a casual sort of way," he told Toby, and if he saw any signs of the cold gust of wind which swept through her he gave no indication. "They've never announced it publicly, but everybody just takes it for granted that they'll ankle up to an altar one of these days."

"Is—that why you seemed surprised when I told you he had asked me for a date?"

"Part of the reason, yes. I'm still surprised that he took you to the Colonial Club, where he must have known there was a chance of running into Stuyvesant."

"Exactly," Toby said, latching onto it. "That's why I think you must be exaggerating. They're friends, sure. I could see that as well as anybody. But I can't believe they're engaged."

Clyde's smile was gentle. "You're a mighty sweet girl, Toby. I hope you're not leading with your heart. Because if you are, you're liable to get hurt. Badly hurt."

Toby worried about his words, but only until the moment the next day when Bruce telephoned all the way from the city to ask for another date. By the time she replaced the phone in its cradle, all of Clyde's warnings had vanished into thin air. And for the balance of the afternoon, Toby found herself humming love songs until the scowls of her annoyed fellow workers shamed her into reluctant silence.

That night another date was set up. And another. And a dozen more. And before Toby knew it, she and Bruce Thorndike were practically a permanent-like combination!

She couldn't believe it at first. She told Mom what was happening, and Mom said, "What are you so surprised about? I told you he was a nice chap." And she still couldn't believe it!

NEXT ISSUE
HALF WAY TO HEAVEN
A Novelet by ANN ARDEN

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CHAPTER IV

WHO IS HOLLACE?

ONE night Bruce invited her to the big house to meet his folks. His father turned out to be just what she had imagined from all the publicity about him—a small-town boy who had amassed a fortune and then retired from the world to enjoy it. Bruce's mother was just as nice as could be to Toby, and they got along beautifully from the very minute they met.

It was this detail, reported to Clyde, which obviously had a devastating effect on him. He stared at her a long time without speaking. And at last he said:

"So he's taking you home to Mama. Sounds serious."

"Oooooh, I wouldn't go that far."

"Maybe you wouldn't. I would. You're not seeing him tonight, are you?"

"No," Toby said, and then wondered how he seemed so sure.

"Want to waste the evening on me?"

"Aw, Clyde, don't talk that kind of way."

"How's about it?"

She shrugged. "I'd love to, sure."

When they left the office together Clyde was in a thoughtful mood. He didn't ask her where she would like to go, but headed instead out the highway as though he had it all figured out in advance. After a while Toby got the picture.

"Colonial Club?" she asked in surprise. "Is that where we're bound?"

"Yep."

She was vaguely disturbed at this. "Any special reason why you picked that particular spot?"

"It's a nice place," Clyde said. "You told me so yourself."

She still didn't get it, even after they arrived. Clyde glanced around the restaurant, looked briefly into the bar and came back. He asked for one of the tables near the door, and continued to evade Toby's questions on his behaviour.

"I'm promising you," he said, "that you shall be fed and entertained. Isn't that enough?"

"But what in the world—"

Then she glanced toward the door and found the answer to all her questions. Two people were standing there. Bruce Thorndike and Hollace Stuyvesant.

Toby turned away quickly, a hot flush rising to her cheeks. But Clyde rose at once before she could stop him, and approached Bruce. "Hello, Thorndike," he said smiling. "I've met you down at the Cathcart office. My name's Clyde Marcy."

"How are you?" Bruce said shaking hands. "Hello, Toby." He introduced Hollace, but Clyde wasn't through.

"Why don't you two join Toby and me?" he invited. "We've got a table for four anyway. You two girls have met, haven't you?"

If there were daggers in the look Hollace gave Clyde, Toby's glare at him contained full-fledged swords. But by now Clyde had herded them to the table and there was nothing they could do but accept. Toby waited until the other couple were seated, then she aimed a powerful kick at Clyde's shins and let go.

"Ouch!" said Bruce—not Clyde. And Toby felt worse than ever.

It was probably the most uncomfortable hour and a half she had ever spent in her life. The disappointment of having Bruce walk in with Hollace clinging to his arm was bad enough. But to have to sit there all through a meal, with a phony smile plastered on her face, while Hollace kept taking sly digs at her—that was too much. Only Clyde seemed to be enjoying himself, and Toby knew the reason all too well. Bruce was thoughtfully silent.

Toby held herself in check some sort of way until she and Clyde left the restaurant. She kept her boiling temper bottled up until they were back in Clyde's car and on their way. And then she cut loose. She called Clyde every name she could think of. She told him that of all the cheap stunts she had ever heard of, that was the cheapest. She fumed and raged and announced that this was definitely the last time she intended to give Clyde a date, if she lived to be a hundred.

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Then she burst into tears. Clyde left her alone until the storm subsided. He pulled off the road and parked, watching Toby and keeping his thoughts to himself.

"Feeling better?" he asked after a while.

"That's a matter of opinion," she mumbled, trying to find a dry spot on her handkerchief. "Better than what?"

"That's the old fight," Clyde said. "Now I'll talk. In the first place, every charge you've hurled at me is true. I admit I took you to the Colonial Club tonight because I wanted you to run into Bruce. I admit I knew he would be there, and that Hollace would be with him."

"How?"

"Mr. Cathcart was talking to Bruce today, trying again to make him sell that piece of waterfront property to be added to the Oak Hills tract. During the course of the conversation, Bruce mentioned the date with Hollace tonight, and where they were planning to go. Cathcart told me."

"Very clever of you, Mr. Marcy."

"I didn't do it to be clever," Clyde said bluntly. "I did it because I thought it was about time you woke up to what was going on. Bruce is just having himself a holiday, chasing around with you. I've tried to tell you that before, and you haven't listened. Maybe you'll be convinced after tonight. Stuyvesant is still top name on his list, and you're not doing yourself any favor by refusing to face facts—"

"Clyde, please!"

"All right," he said quietly. "I'll shut up. It's no fun for me to have to hurt you, Toby. I think you know that. But it's going to be a lot tougher later on, when that chap lets you down."

NOT only did Toby feel completely whipped, but absolutely lifeless. She wanted to answer him, to defend Bruce. But tonight she could think of nothing to say.

"Incidentally," Clyde went on, "Cathcart got nowhere with him on the property deal. Apparently young Mr. Thorndike isn't too interested in the housing shortage. He says he has plans of his own for that piece of land. For my money, that's not the real reason at all."

"Go on," Toby said, her voice flat. "I'll listen. What do you think the real reason is?"

"I think he doesn't like the idea of having people living that close to his own place. Frankly, I think he's a snob, whether you do or not."

She flared. "You have no right to draw any conclusions like that, Clyde! It's not fair!"

"Look, Toby, you like dogs. There's your perfect example. Bruce Thorndike likes to raise dogs. But curs? Mongrels? Not on your life. What he's interested in is pedigreed dogs only. Maybe that doesn't mean much to you, but it does to me. What kind was this pup you found?"

"A Framingham Retriever."

"Exactly. And he was glad to get him back. I wonder how glad he would have been if the dog had been just a good old-fashioned mutt."

He turned to her and his voice caught fire. "Confound it, Toby, that's important! It explains why he won't sell that land. It explains why he goes for a dressed-up chunk of trash like Hollace Stuyvesant! Can't you see that? Don't you see what you're up against?"

Toby closed her eyes. "Let's go home, Clyde, please," she whispered.

"Okay."

A few minutes later he asked, "Did you mean what you said about being through with me?"

Her hand closed over his.

"Don't be silly," she answered wearily. "I'll get over this. All of it."

"Good girl," Clyde said.

She was back on the track again by the time she reached the office the next morning. "The thing for you to do," she lectured herself, "is to be firm. Clyde is right about Bruce, and you know it. So if the young man ever phones again and asks for a date, you just tell him to go climb a tree. That's the thing to do."

Her phone rang. It was Bruce, calling to ask her for a date that night.

"I'd love to," she said weakly.

When she hung up she was fuming at herself. "Haven't you any pride?" she stormed. "Haven't you any self respect?"

But she smiled. What did pride and self-respect have to do with it, when she

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was so hopelessly in love? It was so much easier just to let the past fade out of her thoughts, and to give in to the delicious thrills at the prospect of the evening ahead. Maybe such a procedure wasn't too smart, in the long run, but Toby was in no mood to argue.

The usual excitement at seeing Bruce seemed even sharper tonight, coming so closely on her disappointment of the night before. And she was delighted to believe any story Bruce threw at her. Not that he tried to alibi his being with Hollace. After all, Toby had no claim on him. She knew that as well as anyone else.

And, as Bruce said, he and Hollace had been friends for years.

YET in spite of her revived happiness at just being with him, Toby couldn't entirely put Clyde's warnings out of her mind. And later on, even after a heavenly evening of dancing with Bruce, she still had to try and find out if Clyde's judgment of Bruce was correct.

"There's a lot doing at the office these days," she said as they sat outside of Toby's home. It was nearly midnight and the street was deserted. She and Bruce were delightfully alone.

"That so?" Bruce said.

"Uh-huh. Plans are really moving forward on the Oak Hills project. The question of buying that extra piece of property seems to be all that's holding them up."

"Our property, you mean."

"Sure," Toby said carefully. "After all, it would make a beautiful spot for building some nice houses."

"I suppose your boss thinks I'm a prime heel for not selling."

"A little stuffy, maybe," she admitted. "I guess you can't blame people for drawing their own conclusions on your reasons for not wanting to sell."

"Such as?"

"Well, that you and your family don't like the idea of seeing a bunch of strangers move in so close."

Bruce stared out of the window. "Is that what you think?" he asked.

"I didn't say that."

"You don't have to. It's fairly obvious."

"Now Bruce, don't get sore—"

"I'm not sore, Toby. But I'm not going to answer a charge like that either. If you think that those are my real reasons—"

"What else can I think!" she cried.

Their eyes met, and she found that Bruce was hurt. Her hands clenched in anger, at him and at herself. She looked at him helplessly.

And then it happened. It wasn't Bruce who made the first move, or Toby. It just happened.

CHAPTER V

CRUEL MISUNDERSTANDING

LITTLE realizing what had brought it about, they were in each other's arms, clinging tightly together, their lips pressed. Toby's anger fled in a wave of joyous happiness. She drew close to Bruce, as close as she possibly could. His arms crushed her to him and he kissed her fiercely, over and over.

"Toby," he murmured. "Toby, darling—"

But they were too hungry for kisses to waste time in idle conversation. They had waited too long already for this magic moment which had come to them at last!

Toby didn't know how long they stayed there, how many thrills raced through her at each new touch of Bruce's firm young lips. She only knew that when they finally drew apart she had agreed to meet him the next night.

"I won't do any more talking now," Bruce said softly. "I think you know what I'm going to ask you tomorrow. But I want to save it until then."

"I know," she murmured.

"It's a lifetime proposition I'm talking about, you know. And I want it to be right, from the very beginning."

"Dearest," she whispered.

They kissed again, and Bruce was gone, leaving her standing there with her pulse racing a mile a minute and her dreams soaring into the clouds.

Her happiness lasted until exactly two

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twenty-five the next afternoon. It was Saturday, but weekends were always busy times at the real estate agency and Toby was still working.

When she answered her phone and heard Bruce's voice, she felt glorious all over again. It wasn't until Bruce had said the incredible words that she realized something was wrong.

Those words were:

"I'm afraid I won't be able to see you tonight, Toby."

Just that. No explanations, no reasons.

"All right, Bruce," she said. "Something important has come up, I suppose?"

"Not particularly," he clipped. "I just can't make it."

"Gee, honey, is anything the matter? I mean, is somebody sick—"

"Nobody's sick."

"Well— Okay. When will I see you, then?"

And the blow fell:

"I doubt if you will be seeing me any more at all, Toby. In fact, I'm certain that you won't!"

And the phone went dead in her hand! She stared at it, too dazed even to think. Her mind moved sluggishly into action. Bruce had broken the date. He hadn't told her why. He hadn't even given any reason. He had told her he didn't expect to see her again. Not ever!

"Oh no!" Toby sobbed, as the full force of the blow finally burst upon her. "No! He didn't mean that!"

BUT the memory of his voice swept back to mock her, and she knew that he had meant it. It was fantastic, it was unbelievable—but it had happened!

She had to get out of there. She fought for control long enough to ask one of the other girls to take the switchboard and explain to Mr. Cathcart that she was leaving for the day. Then she hurried out, battling to hold her tears in check. Clyde Marcy was coming in just then, but he saw that something was wrong and didn't try to stop her.

Mom was home when she arrived. She was holding the door open when Toby hurried up the path, and she said, "Don't tell me Cathcart is getting human after all these years, and giving you some time off—" Then she saw, and her voice softened. "Toby! What's the matter, dear? What's the trouble?"

Toby dropped onto the couch and buried her face in her hands, giving way to the sobs that burst forth. Mom sat down beside her and waited until Toby felt like talking. She waited quite a while. And when Toby did finally pull herself together enough to tell Mom what had happened, Mom's surprise was just as great as her own.

"I simply can't believe it," she said, shaking her head slowly. "I simply cannot believe it."

"If he had only told me why," Toby choked. "Golly, I wouldn't have minded his breaking the date. It would have been all right, no matter what the reason was. But he wouldn't even tell me why, Mom!"

"I know," she said, stroking Toby's hair gently. "The way it happened, it sounds as though there wasn't any reason."

"That's what makes it so awful," Toby said, her voice hollow. "He didn't even bother trying to lie about it. All he wanted to do was get rid of me, make sure I wouldn't bother him any more."

And once again the bitterness of her disappointment choked off her words.

Clyde Marcy dropped by the next afternoon. She managed to work up a little warmth in her welcome, but she couldn't fool him and she knew it.

"Something must have blown up between you and Bruce," Clyde said. "Feel like talking about it?"

She shook her head and Clyde said, "Suit yourself. But I have an excellent shoulder for crying on. One of the best."

"You don't have to tell me that," she said, forcing a smile. "Are you in a charitable frame of mind?"

"Absolutely."

"Want to take me for a ride and help me blow some of the gloom out? I've never played the part of a jilted female before, and I don't particularly like it."

"You've got courage, Toby," Clyde smiled. "Get in."

They drove for a long time, far up into the mountains. They had dinner at a tourist roadside stop, and darkness had fallen long before they got home.

"Thanks a million," Toby said as she

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fitted her key into the lock. The house was dark. Mom was already asleep.

"Feel better?" Clyde asked.

"Like a new woman. And that's bound to be an improvement."

She turned. "Good night, Clyde. See you at the office tomorrow—"

She got no further. Clyde seized her gruffly and his lips burned into hers. She made no effort to resist. She was too fond of Clyde, really fond of him, to hurt him for anything in the world.

He drew back at last, and his eyes bored into hers. "All right, now you know about Thorndike," he said. "Now you've got the whole picture in nice, bright colors. Where does that leave me?"

She fought to find the right words. "Clyde, I'm—I just can't—"

"Okay, let's admit you're still carrying the torch for the man. That's to be expected. I don't want a definite answer now. But blast it all, Toby, I've got a right to expect some sort of assurance for the future! I can't just go on indefinitely hanging in space this way!"

"I don't want you to, Clyde," she replied miserably. "I've never wanted you to. I've tried to be honest with you—"

Clyde's shoulders sagged. "I get it," he said wearily. "You don't have to beat me over the head. Not more than a few thousand times."

"You know how much I think of you—"

"Skip it, Toby. Any minute now you'll be launching into the big-brother routine. That I couldn't take."

He walked down the steps and paused. "I thought this would be it," he muttered. "I thought the rebound effect might be strong enough. Looks like I was wrong."

And he left without looking back. Another sleepless night for Toby followed. She tossed for hours, closed her eyes time after time to open them again and stare up into the hostile darkness. Everything was wrong, she concluded. It was bad enough that she had fallen in love with a droop who walked out on her. But it hadn't stopped there. On top of it all, she had been forced to pull the same kind of act on Clyde.

"One of these days," she thought moodily, "I'll track down the character who said love is grand. When I do, I'll wring his neck."

She made another pitch at coaxing some sleep, and this time she succeeded. When she awoke the sun was already smiling down from a cheerful sky.

"What are you so happy about?" Toby grumbled as she weaved across the room to close the window.

She paused. She had heard a noise. "It can't be!" she groaned. "Not again!"

But it was. A whine. A whine which sounded suspiciously as though it came from a dog. Toby yanked on the blue flannel robe, jerked the cord into an unbeautiful knot and hurried to the front door.

She pulled it open and glared. "You," she said angrily.

Fishface looked up at her with love-sick eyes. "*Fniff*," he said, and leaped up on her.

"Oh, go way," she grumbled, but she smiled as she did so and she made no effort to make him get down. "You're just a traitor anyway, that's what you are. How did you get loose this time?"

She looked again and frowned. There was a string on the dog's neck. She followed the string around and found a crudely made sign, its lettering scrawled in hasty pencil marks. She read the message and gasped.

It said:

Dere prutty lady:
I am losted. I dun runned away. Pleze take me home. I can't liv withoutn my master. He says he cant liv withoutn you.
Very truly yrs,
Fishface.

"Well of all the colossal nerve—"

CHAPTER VI

"KISS ME SOME MORE!"

FROM around the corner of the house, Bruce Thorndike suddenly appeared. He walked toward her slowly, hands thrust deep in his pockets.

"They've got organizations to prevent cruelty to animals," he said. "Why don't they es-

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tablish something like that for humans?"

Toby's heart pounded crazily, but her anger flared. "You've got something there," she said heatedly. "Only, why should you be complaining? You're the one who cracked the whip."

"Not until you cracked it first, angelpuss. After all, no man enjoys finding out that his girl has been playing him for a sucker, especially not when he knows he's overboard about her—"

"Wait a minute!" Toby wheezed. "Hold the phone! What's all this about playing you for a sucker? What on earth are you talking about?"

"Don't try to protest," Bruce said sharply. "It doesn't matter anyhow. I know now that I'm so nuts about you I don't even care. That's what love can do for you. I don't even give a hoot if your interest in me was strictly for business reasons. See? I'm admitting I'm a dope. I'm admitting—"

"Bruce Thorndike, have you gone stark raving mad?"

"I must have, to be here making another play for you, after what you tried to pull on that Oak Hills deal."

Toby exhaled slowly, then drew some new air back into her lungs. "Would you mind letting me in on the secret?" she said with deadly slowness. "I mean, would it be asking too much to know just what fiendish crime I'm accused of?"

"It's not a crime," Bruce said with a shrug. "There's no law which says you shouldn't play up to me the way you did, so that I would agree to sell our piece of waterfront property to your boss. That's legitimate, I suppose. Especially since you stood to cop yourself a nice fat commission—"

He frowned at the look on her face. "You're not going to try to deny it, are you? After all, Clyde Marcy told me himself, only Saturday. He's certainly in a position to know. He works in the same office as you, and—"

"Clyde Marcy!"

She bit the name off with the sharpness of a whipcrack. "So that's where all this foolishness came from!"

[*Turn page*]

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Bruce seized her shoulders and spun her around to face him. "Then it's not true?" he asked eagerly. "You weren't just giving me a song-and-dance? You meant all those swell things we said, and didn't say, and dreamed about?"

"You idiot," Toby said, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. "You foolish, adorable idiot! Couldn't you see through a cockeyed story like that? Couldn't you realize that Clyde is in love with me himself, and would do anything he could to come between you and me?"

"I thought of all that, sure," Bruce admitted. "But I was so crazy in love with you I couldn't decide. If you didn't mean the world to me, I guess I wouldn't have minded—"

"Bruce, will you please stop talking so much and kiss me?"

He obeyed with enthusiasm, right there on the front steps, while Fishface gazed at them in complete approval.

"Wow!" Toby said happily. "Now we're getting somewhere!"

"You're not just kidding," Bruce said. "And now that I know you weren't in on the deal, I feel better about what I've done. You won't be losing out on anything."

"Losing out?"

He reached down and picked up the morning paper lying at her feet.

"Maybe this will explain it," he said, and opened the paper to the first page. Toby's eyes widened as the item leaped up at her:

THORNDIKES DONATE PROPERTY FOR CITY PARK

The John Thorndike family has announced, through Mr. Bruce Thorndike, that they are donating to the city their strip of water-front property adjoining the new Oak Hills development. This will be converted into a public park and yacht basin with funds also furnished by the family—

"That's why I haven't wanted to sell to Cathcart," Bruce explained while Toby tried to convince herself that she wasn't still asleep. "Dad's had this idea in the back of his mind for a long time."

"It's a grand scheme," Toby breathed. "But with the housing shortage so acute—"

"Angelpuss, haven't you looked into that setup at all? If Cathcart wants to expand, there's all the land in the world on the other side! What's more, I've checked on it, and the owners would be tickled pink to let Cathcart have as much property as he wants. But your boss is a shrewd operator. He wanted to spread over in our direction because the property is worth more, would make him more of a profit. See?"

"I see," Toby said gleefully. "Kiss me some more."

EAGERLY Bruce obeyed. "And I thought you were such a snob," she murmured. "That's another thing Clyde was all wrong about. He called you just a lover of pedigreed dogs. He said you were the sort of chap who wouldn't go for anything without a fancy name."

Bruce grinned. "Fancy name is right. I'll give all comers, friend Clyde included, a hundred bucks if they'll tell me what a Framingham Retriever is."

Toby blinked. "But Fishface—"

"Fishface, my sweet, is a pure-blooded, thoroughbred mutt. And furthermore, he was not the dog I lost! My dog was returned before you got there!"

She shook her head violently. "One of us is bats, and I think I know who. Do you mean to tell me—"

"Now *you* hold the phone," Bruce said gently. "I knew the pup was a stray the minute you brought him to me. He had no collar and no tag. Furthermore, there's a drive on in town now against strays. If one of us hadn't given Fishface a home, he would have been headed for the gas chamber as soon as the dogcatcher caught up with him. You told me yourself that you and your mother couldn't keep a dog, so I decided to hang on to him." He tilted up Toby's chin and looked into her eyes.

"And for your information, darling, he's my favorite pooch now, thoroughbred or not. Partly because he's just a wonderful hound. But mostly because he brought you into my life."

"Bruce," Toby whispered.

"What, dearest?"

"You're talking an awful lot. Why don't you kiss me some more?"

Their lips met, and their eyes closed. Two other eyes remained open, surveying the scene joyfully.

"Rrrrrrff!" said Fishface, which seemed to settle everything.

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Mark's arms went around her and his lips were tender

When there's a threesome in hearts, Sandy Lee finds her own emotions in—

DOUBLE DANGER

By Polly Sweet

SANDY Lee was furiously angry and she was hurt, too, horribly hurt but Sandy would have died rather than let Tom Paterson know how she felt.

For days, ever since he had moved to Terrytown, she had wanted to meet him. He was so big and handsome and so very gay. She thought it would be wonderful just to be near him. It is silly to be half in love with a man you've never met but that was the way it was with Sandy. That was how she felt about Tom.

It was the reason she had been so anxious to go to Barbara Jennifer's swimming party. Tom Paterson was going to be there. Barbara loved to give swimming parties. She looked so well in a bathing suit. That had been one of the reasons she had moved into the particular apartment house where she lived. It had a good sized swimming pool as one of its principal attractions. Sandy and Barbara worked in the same office and in spite of the great difference between them in temperaments, they were good friends.

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And now the evening of the party had finally arrived and Sandy had been introduced to Tom. She managed not to sound excited as she acknowledged the greeting. A little breathlessly she waited while he looked her over appraisingly.

"Well, hello," he answered her greeting. "I didn't know there were going to be any children at this party."

That was when Sandy was filled with fury. She drew herself up to her full height and said coldly, "I'm eighteen—almost nineteen."

"You don't look it," he said. "But don't you mind. You're cute, a cute, little trick if ever I saw one."

"Well!" she flashed and would have gone on but Tom interrupted her.

"Very cute! Some day you'll grow up to be quite a gal. Remind me to date you when you grow up."

Sandy didn't want him to think her cute. She wanted him to think her beautiful, desirable. Now she wanted to snap at him in hurt protest but some instinctive knowledge prevented it. She forced a smile and answered in her best "cute little trick" manner. "I'll remind you," she said sweetly and then, "that is, if you have to be reminded."

Tom flashed her a searching look but she was smiling innocently. Such a cute, little trick!

She promised herself then that one day Tom Paterson would realize that she was quite grown up.

THE party proceeded gayly. Everyone seemed to be having a wonderful time. Tom didn't bother to stay near her and certainly she couldn't pursue him. A girl has her pride.

Later in the evening, Sandy happened to turn around quickly and caught Tom regarding her appraisingly. Instinctively her hands went to her hair. It was a tangled mess, unless you like crazy, little curls. She never could wear a cap in swimming. She knew that now she looked more like a child than ever. She tore her glance away from Tom's and moved back from the pool, trying to smooth her hair.

"Be yourself, youngster. You can't take high dives and expect to have your hair remain unruffled. Besides, it looks cute that way."

Sandy regarded the young man beside her belligerently. She would have hated him for the word "cute" alone. But to make matters worse, he was handsome. "Too good looking," Sandy thought resentfully.

"Who are you," she asked him.

"Name's Mark Farnsworth. I'm Barbara's cousin.'

"Oh. I've heard about you."

She stopped, flushing as she remembered the things she had heard about him.

"I take it that you weren't favorably impressed," Mark said. "Barbara doesn't like me much."

"It just so happens, Mr. Farnsworth that Barbara never mentioned you but once, to tell me that you were her cousin. I read about you in the newspaper the time you made the cross country flight and nearly broke a record—only you decided to stop off on the way and call on a blonde."

Mark lifted an eyebrow ever so slightly. "The child can read."

"You, too?" exclaimed Sandy in disgust. She was furious again. "I'm not a child and I wish people would realize it." She had no desire to cover her true feelings with this dark-eyed, taunting person. She didn't care what he thought of her.

"You look like one, you know. Only sometimes—"

"Oh, shut up." She swung around and dashing for the pool, dived in, but in her blindness she stumbled at the pool's edge. It was a very poor dive and it knocked the wind out of her. Her side hurt from the way she had twisted. She knew Mark had seen the dive and probably Tom had, too. They would be laughing at her. Somehow, she felt as though she couldn't face it. She wished she could sink to the bottom of the pool and stay there.

It was then that she felt a hand on her shoulder and a voice that she hardly recognized as Mark's say, "Steady, kid. That was a bad dive. Someone left a towel at the edge of the pool. You might have gotten badly hurt."

She wanted to pull away from his touch and yet it was so steadying. If

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that pain in her side got any worse, she might faint.

"Let's get out of this. I'll drive you home."

"Thanks, but it's only a few blocks. I'll be all right."

"Get dressed. I'll explain to Barbara."

She felt too miserable to protest. She said good-by to the girls and waved a general good-by to the boys and started for the door.

Snatches of sentences reached her as she went.

"With Mark Farnsworth, no less," from one of the girls. "He's dangerous."

"A danger worth while if you ask me," another girl said.

Then a voice she would never fail to recognize spoke. "She's a child playing with fire. Someone should look after her."

Tom was interested in her now because Mark Farnsworth had noticed her. Mark was just a little older. He had been in the air force for two years. Mark had been around more than any of the others, and had acquired a reputation for rushing a girl and dropping her when he saw another he liked better.

SANDY smiled. Mark was no danger to her. She knew all about him—at least all she cared to know. If a girl fell in love with him, deeply in love, then there would be danger. Remembering how attractive he was and also how gentle when he wanted to be, she smiled a little to herself—double danger.

Well, so far as she was concerned, it was unimportant. Certainly she had no idea of falling in love with Mark Farnsworth.

"Ready?" Mark was beside her.

"All ready," she replied and without another word they went out to his car.

Not until he had started it and driven for a block or so did Mark speak again.

"How about a little ride before you go home?"

"Why?" Sandy asked.

"What a suspicious nature?"

"Just careful," Sandy replied.

Mark considered this for a moment. Then he flashed her a smile. "You don't think much of me, little Sandy. Perhaps you're right. Maybe I haven't been using my head. Nothing seemed very important. There was a reason—girl trouble. I found that one girl couldn't be trusted so I thought I couldn't trust any of them. Anyway, don't worry, youngster. With you I'll be the essence of propriety. Somehow," he went on, still grinning, "somehow, with you I don't feel a bit wolfish. I feel—" He stopped as though surprised at himself. "I feel like shaking you and giving you some good advice. I—well, I'd hate to see you get hurt."

"What advice?" Sandy wanted to know.

"Don't wear your heart on your sleeve. Don't let your feelings show in your eyes. It's bad. Frightens the guy away."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Don't you?"

"Was it that obvious?" Sandy asked after a moment.

"Only to me. You see I thought you were a pretty cute little—I thought you were very attractive and I watched you closely. If you happened to notice me, it didn't register. You were too interested looking after Tom Paterson. I guess my ego was hurt."

"You're a strange person," Sandy said thoughtfully, "not half as bad as I thought." She stopped short, her face flushing.

Mark laughed. "That is one of the things that I like most about you. You are honest. If a fellow put his trust in you, you would never let him down." The last was said to her seriously, almost grimly.

There was a moment's silence.

"It still hurts, doesn't it?" Sandy asked softly.

"If you mean do I still love her, the answer is no. As for the hurt—" He stared ahead. "Sure it hurts. My pride, I guess."

"I—I wish it were just my pride," Sandy said.

"You really are hit hard."

"I guess I am."

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Mark meditated for a minute. "Maybe I can help."

"I don't see how."

"I could—er—help you grow up."

"You do think I'm—just a kid?"

For a moment Mark didn't answer. He studied the lighted end of his cigarette. He put the cigarette to his mouth and inhaled deeply, then exhaled slowly, thoughtfully.

"Well?" asked Sandy impatiently. Marked crushed out his cigarette.

"I think you're very sweet."

"Hm!" said Sandy scornfully at which Mark laughed heartily. He reached for her and drew her toward him.

"Listen, Sandy, it is a rare quality. Hold onto it."

"But I don't want to be just sweet. I want to be desirable."

Mark's arms tightened around her. His lips closed down on hers—hard. She hadn't really meant to but somehow she was returning his kiss with more ardor than she had ever kissed any man before.

WHEN he released her, Mark said slowly and his lips were unsmiling, "Don't worry, Sandy, you are more than just sweet. I'd advise you to—er—watch those kisses. Another man might not understand."

Another man! Her face flamed. She had never kissed any man like that before. Of course she had never kissed Tom Paterson. Somehow she felt a little ashamed of herself for kissing anyone the special way she believed she should save for the man she fell in love with.

"Mark, I didn't mean anything," she stammered.

Mark touched her lips lightly with his finger tips. "I understand, honey. Believe me, I understand. Forget it, now and go to bed. It's late."

He was so casual about it all, so understanding that Sandy felt an intense relief, a wave of gratitude.

"Thank you, Mark," she said scarcely above a whisper.

Mark simply nodded. "'Night," he said and turned to leave.

"'Night," Sandy called after him and it must have been because she felt more confidence in herself, in her ability to interest Tommy that she added involuntarily, "and thanks."

The next day Sandy felt happier than for a long time. Somehow she felt that when next she saw Tom Paterson, she would not be afraid. She would know what to say, how to act. There would be no reason to think her a child. Somehow she felt quite grown up. Then it came to her in a flash that she had felt that way ever since Mark's kiss. It had taken another man's kiss. Impatiently she tried to push the thought out of her mind. She had told Mark she was sorry—and he understood. Another man might have made her feel ashamed but Mark had understood. That was that.

She was anxious to see Tom again. She was almost sure he would be at the regular Saturday night community dance. Although she had a date for the night with Jim Stevens, she would see Tom and perhaps dance with him.

She dressed with special care for the dance. Everything had to be just right.

Almost the first one she saw as she entered the hall was Tom. He was not alone. Standing with him was Barbara. Sandy's heart twisted. Of course, he'd fall for Barbara. She was beautiful, witty, sophisticated, everything Tom would want in a girl.

Even as Sandy danced with Jim Stevens, her eyes followed Tom and Barbara.

She was startled when a voice said, "May I cut in?" Then she was in Mark Farnsworth's arms.

"I don't usually cut in on a fellow's first dance with his date but I had to save you."

"Save me?" Sandy asked amazed.

"Sure. The way you were mooning over Tom—well, it's a shame. For goodness' sake, snap out of it. Your date must be blind. If my girl—"

"I'm not his girl, or anybody's girl. We've been friends since we were kids."

"Then I won't break his heart if I steal you for a dance or two?"

"Certainly not but—"

"What's the matter? Don't you want to dance with me?"

Sandy shrugged.

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"It really doesn't matter."

Mark laughed. "Now that's the way you should act with Paterson, cool and unconcerned. With me you can be truthful. You don't really want to dance with me. You don't like me. You resent me because I tell you a few things you don't want to hear."

Sandy flashed, "You're impossible."

"Just honest."

They danced the rest of the dance in silence. Not until he returned her to her date did he speak. Then it was a casual, "Thanks, Sandy. Remember what I told you." Before Sandy could answer he was gone.

"Well," said Jim and Sandy had never heard him speak with such vehemence. "He certainly acts as though he owned you."

SANDY looked at Jim in surprise. Her lips parted to reply and then closed together—tight. An idea had struck her.

"Well, you can't blame him really. I mean, he's awfully jealous." She managed to act embarrassed. Kid! Child! Youngster was she? She could play as neat a game as any of them.

Because Mark had appeared interested in her, Tom had suddenly realized she was alive. Even now she could see that he was looking in her direction. And Jim, who had not meant a thing to her or she to him, was all at once concerned about the way she was treated. Well, if that was what it took to interest men—especially Tom, let them think Mark was in love with her and she with him, for the moment anyway.

As for Mark, if it complicated things for him she was glad of it. He was conceited, presumptuous. In other words, he was impossible.

Tom came up to ask her for the next dance and Jim glared.

"You stags!" he muttered.

Sandy smiled at him sweetly. "But Tom didn't come stag, Jim. Why don't you ask his date to dance with you? He came with Barbara Jennifer."

"She's dancing with Mark Farnsworth," Tom said, which fact Sandy had already observed.

Sandy's smile became positively angelic. "Now isn't that nice of Mark? Dancing with his own cousin." She paused an expressive moment and finished simply, "He is so sweet."

"He's a wolf." Tom's voice was grim.

"A predatory one at that," Jim said. "Sandy is my date. As for Farnsworth and you, too, jump in the lake!"

"Come now, Jimmie, dear," Sandy interrupted, "Tom just wants one little dance, and I'm sure Mark understands now that I'm your date."

Jimmie grunted and Sandy slipped into Tom's arms.

"You little witch. What do you mean one little dance? I want every dance I can get. Why did I ever give another fellow the chance to date you."

"Oh, that!" Sandy said vaguely. "Of course you couldn't have every dance but Jim wouldn't mind a couple, I'm sure. Jim and I are just pals. He dates me when Cindy Travers is out of town or something."

"He didn't sound that way."

"He was a little angry at something Mark said. Sometimes Mark acts—well, rather possessive."

Curiously, she found herself looking straight into Mark's eyes. He was at some distance from her, leaning against one of the columns that supported the balcony. When he caught her looking at him he smiled a little, but his smile was somehow mocking, even a little contemptuous.

All at once she felt heartsick. She didn't like playing games. Why did she have to flirt and pretend to be in love with someone else so the man she was really interested in would notice her. Why couldn't she be honest? She moved closer in Tom's arms and they tightened around her.

"Listen, sweet, I've been a little slow at catching on but I'll make up for lost time. How about a date for tomorrow afternoon? It's Sunday and we can drive out into the country and have dinner and get acquainted."

Her heart leaped excitedly. How easily she had won! Tom had asked her for a date. Then she remembered Mark's words. She must act casual, unconcerned. She must not wear her heart on her sleeve or in her eyes.

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"Perhaps. I'm not sure. Call me tomorrow."

"Mark?" Tom asked.

Her shrug could have meant anything.

"I have to think it over," she said.

It was several dances later that Mark strode purposefully up to Sandy.

"Dance?" he asked.

WITHOUT waiting for her reply he pulled her up to him. "Thanks, Stevens," he called over Sandy's shoulder to Jim who stood frowning after him.

"Well!" said Sandy when they were out of hearing, "Why the cave man tactics?"

"You tell me something first. Why have you told Jim and Tom that we are—well, practically going steady—or something?"

"I didn't tell them," Sandy smiled up at Mark sweetly. "I just let them think so."

"But why? It's—it's such a lie."

"I know." All at once Sandy was serious. "I know and I'm sorry if it complicated things for you. I thought it was a good idea when I discovered how quickly Tom became interested in me after he thought you liked me. Even Jim got that way, too. You must have quite a reputation."

"I have. And that is strictly my affair."

"Of course, but what are you so mad about? You certainly don't think your blonde friend out in Texas will hear about it."

"Leave her out of it," Mark said sharply.

Sandy was surprised. She hadn't known he felt that way.

"Mark," she said contritely. "I didn't know you cared. I mean, you said you didn't."

"I said I'd gotten over any girl I thought I was in love with, and I have."

"Then what is the matter?"

"It is just that—" he said and then hesitated a moment. "Oh, never mind."

"See?" Sandy said. "You're only mad because it wasn't your idea and it is such a wonderful idea. Tommie is already interested. He asked me for a date. Tomorrow we're going to ride out into the country."

"Congratulations!" Mark's voice was edged. "And to think I considered taking you under my wing for instructions. Baby, you know all the answers."

The dance was over and he took his arms from around her immediately, as if he couldn't let her go soon enough. He seemed to be angry and Sandy couldn't understand why.

Sandy only knew that the thought of Mark's being angry at her made her uncomfortable.

"Mark." She put her hand on his arm. "Come outside on the veranda a moment. I want to talk to you."

SILENTLY he followed her. As soon as they were outside, he pulled her almost roughly into his arms and kissed her. It was an angry kiss.

"What else, darling?" he asked as he let her go. "It is a good idea to make a guy jealous by giving him a little competition but I wouldn't carry it too far. It might backfire."

"Mark, you're horrid. I didn't ask you out here to make Tommie jealous. I just want to ask you why you are so angry with me. I—I didn't mean to hurt you." She stopped and her voice caught on a sob. "I guess I'm not very good at playing games. I'll tell them there is nothing at all between us." Her lips quivered a little. "I'll tell them you don't even like me."

She started to move away from him but he caught her hand and drew her back to him. He didn't take her in his arms but he put his hands on her shoulders, holding her.

"Listen, infant," he said huskily. "You are either the craziest kid in the world, or the cleverest."

Tears came unbidden to her eyes.

"Let me go," she said.

"In a minute."

Mark's arms went around her, this time gently and his lips when they touched hers were tender. It was crazy how her pulses raced, how little flames seemed to run through her body. Crazy, crazy, when it was Tommie she wanted to love her, Tommie she was in love with. It was all wrong that she fitted so perfectly into his arms, that

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her lips should quiver against his and his should immediately become demanding. She tried to reason, to tell herself it was madness but in the end she only found herself trembling and clinging to him as though she would never let him go.

When he released her, Mark looked at her for a long moment. "When you see Tom again," he said, "you can tell him that there is something between us, and it will not be a lie."

Sandy turned away with a jerk and hurried into the club house. Jim was standing near the door. Immediately he took her hand and led her out onto the floor to dance. Across the hall, Sandy saw Tom watching her. He had seen her hurrying into the room. He smiled and there was something about the smile that Sandy didn't like.

"Let's go home, Jim," Sandy said when the dance was over. "I'm tired."

"I thought we might go on to the Red Parrot Inn for a while. It might be more exciting."

"Some other time, Jim, but not tonight. I—I'd like to go home." Sandy felt that she must get alone so she could think.

"Okay," said Jim and Sandy went for her wrap.

Far into the night Sandy tried to analyze her feelings. She had wanted Tom to like her, and he did. She had wanted him to date her, and he had. Everything was just perfect, or should be. It was the thought of Mark that complicated things. His kisses, first angry, then tender.

It was very late when she finally decided to put Mark out of her thoughts entirely. Whatever had made him angry didn't matter. He had gotten over it. Probably he had kissed her just to show her that they were friends again. She smiled to herself contentedly. So they were friends. After that she fell asleep to dream blissfully of Tom and of his arms around her and of his kisses, but somehow it was Mark's lips she felt against hers.

When she awoke in the morning, she felt disturbed remembering the dream. Today there would not be time to think much of Mark and she was glad. Today she would have her first date with Tom Paterson. She would tell him "yes" when he telephoned and after that there would be many others. She sang as she dressed. Pale blue linen that made her hair seem more golden than usual, and her eyes darker. Perhaps it was the thought of Tom that made little flames of excitement shine in her eyes. Or maybe just that she was self confident. Hadn't Mark said she was desirable.

MARK again! The warm color surged into her cheeks. She wished she could get him out of her mind.

When Tom called she was her very sweetest to him. Yes, she would be glad to go. She could be ready to leave any time.

"Half an hour, then, sweet."

"Half an hour, Tommie," she replied.

She was ready when Tom arrived and eager with anticipation. How handsome he was! She was a lucky girl, luckiest in the crowd for she had Tom Paterson.

They drove out into the country. It was beautiful and Sandy loved it. A plane flashed across the sky and Sandy thought of Mark and the time he almost won a cross country contest, but had stopped off in Texas on account of a girl. Somehow the thought irritated her. Not that she cared how many girls Mark had. It was just such a stupid thing for a man to do when he was on the brink of success and possible fame.

"Sandy, baby, I'm talking to you. Want to stop where we can dance or shall we find a quiet spot where we can be alone?"

Sandy roused herself. "I'd love to dance," she said and added swiftly when she saw his disappointed look. "You're such a wonderful dancer."

Immediately Tom grinned and Sandy knew that she was learning fast. She knew, too, that she didn't want to go to any quiet spot to be alone with Tom Paterson. That plane streaking across the sky had brought thoughts of Mark and that, in turn, the memory of Mark's kiss. Quite suddenly she knew why she hadn't been able to get the thought of Mark out of her mind. She

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was in love with him.

The knowledge left her shaken. Impressing Tom had been easy, but making Mark think of her as anything but a crazy kid would be next to impossible. Mark, who had had so many girls, who still had a girl somewhere in Texas. To Mark, she had revealed her innermost thoughts. Oh, it was hopeless all right.

Again she was roused from her thoughts by Tom.

"What's the matter, kid? I thought we were going to have fun."

"I'm sorry, Tom. I guess I'm not very good company today."

"That's all right honey. I like to take my time getting acquainted and somehow this time I think it will be worth while."

Sandy couldn't think of anything better to say than, "Are we almost there? I feel like dancing."

Tom took it for a compliment and beamed.

During the next few hours, Sandy did her best to be good company. She danced. She laughed at Tom's wise cracks. She flattered him a little, and all the time she could hardly wait to get home.

When she finally got home, she allowed Tom a brief goodnight kiss and then slipped from his arms.

"Thanks, Tommie, for a pleasant time. It's late now and after all I am a working girl and have to be at the office on time in the morning."

"Sure," Tom agreed. "I know, and there's lots of time for us to get to know each other. Good night, baby. I'll be seeing you."

Sandy didn't answer. She just nodded and hurried into the house.

The next morning at the office Barbara greeted her coldly.

"You were out with Tom Paterson yesterday."

"Yes," said Sandy and felt glad that she didn't want Tom for herself. Barbara liked him—a lot. The hurt look in her eyes showed it. "Yes. We went for a drive and dancing. It was a wonderful day and everything, but somehow we just didn't click."

Interest suddenly showed in Barbara's eyes.

"I'm glad," she said frankly. "I thought—well, after what Mark said—"

"Mark said what?"

"Not much. Just last night when he came to say good-by I mentioned Tom and he rather guessed I liked him. He told me that I'd better look somewhere else, that another girl liked Tom and it appeared that Tom had fallen hard for her. He meant you were that girl. He didn't say so but I guessed it was so."

"Wait," Sandy said. "You said Mark came to say good-by?"

"Sure. He's leaving this afternoon for Texas."

SANDY gripped the side of her desk for support. Texas! The blond girl friend! He was going to her.

"Barbara, where is Mark now? I want to see him before he leaves, to say good-by."

Barbara's eyes opened a little wider. "It's not Tom, then. It's Mark."

"It's not Tom," Sandy agreed.

Barbara's voice was suddenly happy. "Run along, honey. Mark is at the Shelby Arms Hotel. He'll be packing now probably. I'll look after things here and explain your absence, and good luck."

Sandy hurried out to the street and hailed a cab. All the way to Mark's hotel she waited tense and a little frightened. She hadn't the slightest idea what she was going to say to him. All she knew was that she couldn't let him go without seeing him once more. Somehow she would let him know that it was he she loved, not Tom. She supposed she should be too proud to do this but somehow pride didn't seem to matter.

Finally, when she faced Mark in the hotel lobby, her courage almost failed her. Especially when he greeted her with a cool, "What do you want?"

"To see you," she told him softly. "Barbara said you were going to leave today for Texas."

"I have been transferred there by the company. I work for an oil company that has interests in Texas."

"Then, it isn't because of her? You're not going there because of a girl?" Sandy's eyes were shining. Her lips trembled. "Oh, Mark. I—" she began and faltered. A girl can't say right out to a man "I love you."

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But there was no need. With swift steps Mark was close to her. His voice was low and husky—and his eyes were filled with a kind of awe—as though he were looking at a miracle. What he said was a little silly perhaps but Sandy understood him and she thought her heart would burst with joy.

"To think I told you not to wear your heart in your eyes. If you hadn't just now I would never have guessed, never have dared to believe what I see there."

"Oh, Mark, I—I couldn't hide it. I just wanted to see you again before you went away, to bid you good-by but—oh, darling, I love you so."

"And I've loved you from the moment I saw you. But I thought it was Tom you were interested in."

"That was before I grew up," Sandy said smiling. "Before you kissed me."

Mark took her in his arms to kiss her but Sandy had to ask one more question. "That blonde in Texas. You're sure?" Mark's arms tightened around Sandy as he replied laughingly. "She was just a very good friend and is now married to an army buddy of mine."

"Oh," Sandy sighed happily.

"Satisfied?" Mark asked softly.

"*Mm—hmm,*" Sandy replied and lifted her lips for his kiss.

Love Notes

LET'S not waste time worrying about the so-called American "husband shortage." There are enough men to go around—and more—according to statistics, which reveal that 11 females out of 12 who reach the age of 15 eventually wed. It's a five to one bet that every young lady who reaches 21 will probably marry within a year. If she hasn't said "Yes," by the time she's thirty, her chances are still good, though reduced to a fifty-fifty basis.

ORDER of the Golden Fleece, one of the most coveted decorations of the Seventeenth Century, was instituted in the name of romance by Philip the Good of Burgundy. He was infatuated by a lovely, golden-haired woman whom he couldn't marry because she was merely a scullery maid. But the king obtained a lock of her hair which he kept with him always, and instituted the famous Order in her honor.

VICTOR HUGO and his "amie," Juliette Drouet, had a true love story far more steadfast than many fictionized romances. It lasted for all of 52 years—from the time Hugo first met her in 1833, until his very death. Although they could not marry for 35 of those years, he visited her daily. And she wrote him from one to three letters every day—an amazing correspondence that added up to 17,000 missives.

ENGAGED couples of long-ago Germany had to undergo an odd examination before marriage. The boy was stationed on one side of a cross-cut saw. The girl was placed at the other end. Then they were requested to fell a tree. If the pair cooperated, the ceremony was performed. But if the starry-eyed youngsters insisted on pulling against each other, no one would permit them to go ahead with the nuptials.

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My Girl, Miss Smith

By SHELBY STEGER

"Bad things, secret engagements," frowned Mr. Stringer

With a Tempest in her heart, this pert and pretty secretary has one stormy time of it!

BURTON TEMPEST, branch manager of Stringer Industries, gave Julie Smith his pleasant, impersonal smile and walked briskly past her desk into his office:

"Good morning, Miss Smith," was what he said.

You'd think, Julie mused irately as she dusted her typewriter, that just once a girl's boss could comment favor-

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ably on the fact that she always got to work before he did. But no—"Good morning, Miss Smith—good night, Miss Smith", and never a kind word between. He didn't see the baleful glare she sent through the glass partition. His smooth dark head was now bent over the factory production figures she had stayed overtime to type last night.

The glare faded and Julie's blue eyes went soft and wistful. Why, she wondered for the hundredth time, did she have to waste her heartbeats being in love with the combination of lean, wide-shouldered height, deep brown eyes, straight nose and firm, controlled mouth which made Burton Tempest so wonderfully, tantalizingly handsome? It was completely futile.

The average young man would have shown some signs of noticing Julie's bright coppery curls, her warm coral mouth, her gently curved slenderness. No average man, Mr. Tempest obviously considered Julie just another example of efficient office machinery. Evidently the only copper which interested him was the wire which went into the electric appliances manufactured by Stringer Industries. The only curves which pleased him were palpably those ascending on a production graph.

"My girl, Miss Smith," he called her patronizingly, infuriatingly. Not "my secretary, Miss Smith". "My girl, Miss Smith, will handle that," he'd blandly inform another executive, while she seethed inwardly. As if I were his slave!

Someday I'll quit, Julie promised herself wildly, and instantly knew herself for a liar. She wouldn't quit for anything! Because eventually a miracle might happen. Someday Burt might take her into his arms, gaze deep into her eyes, and murmur "Julie, I—I—"

The buzzer sounded, Julie jumped, and the foolish little dream went pop!

"Yes, Mr. Tempest?"

He glanced up from his desk, seemed surprised to find her there. "Oh. Oh, yes, I rang. Mr. Stringer is flying in from the home office, to inspect the plant and office, and to attend the 'Strive with Stringer' anniversary dinner tonight. You might speak to Miss Dolan in Files, caution her to be discreet when she comes in contact with young Fairbanks in Bookkeeping. You remember, of course, Mr. Stringer's attitude toward fraternization between employees of opposite sexes."

AND NOW Mr. Tempest frowned. "I don't always agree with Mr. Stringer's ideas, but he's the boss," he continued. "I'd hate to be forced to let Miss Dolan go. If she and Mr. Fairbanks were engaged—but they aren't, I hear. Thanks. That's all."

Julie found Betsy Dolan in the rest room powdering her pert little nose.

"That old fuddyduddy, our beloved Big Boss, will be in today," she warned. "You know the non-dating rule, but you're new and maybe you don't know why. Mr. Stringer was jilted in his youth, so the story goes, and he hates women. While he accepts married male employes as a necessary evil, he demands that any office romances spring into full bloom, with no preliminary sparking. Silly, but that's the way it is." She grinned. "So don't look moon-eyed at your Dick, Betsy, or Mr. Stringer'll fire you right in your tracks."

"Gee, thanks, Julie," Betsy breathed. "I'll try, though I don't know how I can stand it. Isn't Dick adorable?"

Julie agreed and returned to her desk, thinking privately that Dick Fairbanks was an unexciting, though nice enough, lad. Ah, well, she sighed, look who I'm in love with—a fiend for production figures. A man who thinks of me, if at all, as his girl, Miss Smith. There was no accounting for tastes.

Shortly after nine, Joel Stringer burst into the office, a red-faced, rotund little man who hugged a large briefcase beneath his pudgy arm. Pausing only to glare through immense tortoise-shell spectacles about the office, as if to surprise his employes with blossoms in their hair dancing wantonly around a Maypole, he swept into Burton Tempest's office. After the briefest of handshakes, he removed his hat and overcoat, opened the briefcase, and fell at once into deep discussion over a sheaf of papers.

Pompous little balloon, Julie thought with fine disloyalty—whoever jilted

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him must have enjoyed it. And tonight we'll have to applaud his after-dinner speech, all full of inspirational phrases designed to make us work harder to make lots of money for him!

Remembering that Stringer Industries paid excellent salaries, and that she disliked Joel Stringer only for his absurd Cupid-baiting policies, Julie dropped her mental tirade as being possibly seditious, and got to work.

But she flamed with anger all over again, when Burt Tempest buzzed for her and she heard the tag end of a sentence:

"—my girl, Miss Smith, has those figures. Miss Smith, will you get the figures on the Dallas factory, please?"

She stared through a red haze at the handsome face of Mr. Tempest. So I'm your girl, am I? I'll fix you!

"Of course, darling," she replied sweetly, went to the files in the outer office, and returned with the required papers. "Here they are, Burt dear," she cooed, and laid them before him.

She had lost her mind, she decided, along with her temper. But it was rather fun, for a brief instant, to enjoy the amazed consternation on Mr. Tempest's face. His dark eyes were incredulous. They seemed to be seeing her, for the first time, as a person.

Mr. Stringer stirred in his chair and gave forth a roar of rage. "'Darling—Burt dear'!" he snorted. "Miss Whatever-your-name is, you're fired! Tempest, I'd fire you, too, if you weren't so valuable to the corporation. You're supposed to set an example around here. What is the meaning of this flagrant violation of rules?"

Julie stood frozen in horror—fired! She could get another job easily enough, but never again to be near Burton Tempest? Never more to adore him, futile though it was? Oh, what had she done!

"Generally speaking, it's an excellent rule, sir," Mr. Tempest was saying soothingly. "However, we can't ignore love. Miss Smith is my fiancee. We've only recently become engaged—hadn't announced it yet."

Julie's coral mouth fell slightly open. As Mr. Stringer's gaze, magnified frighteningly by the heavy spectacles, raked her, she closed it, smiled and nodded.

"Yes, sir," she squeaked. "B-Burt and I are engaged." Any minute now I'll wake up, she told herself. I'm just asleep and dreaming, that's all.

"Most irregular. Bad things, secret engagements." He frowned disapprovingly, darted a suspicious glance at each of them. "I shall announce the happy event at tonight's dinner, stressing the fact that it must not be considered a precedent. Open and above-board, that's the Stringer code. Yes, I shall announce it."

"Oh, no!" Julie started to exclaim, but Mr. Tempest interrupted.

"Just as you wish, sir. Julie dear, I'll see you a little later."

Julie tottered to the dressing-room to restore herself with a cigarette. This was fantastic and impossible!

WHEN Julie emerged, Mr. Stringer was gone, so she hastened to Mr. Tempest's office.

"I can't tell you how sorry I am," she began apologetically, then her temper flared. "It's really your fault, Mr. Tempest. If you didn't persist in calling me 'your girl, Miss Smith'—it's maddening! As if I belonged to you, like your desk or your telephone!" She breathed rapidly. "I'm your secretary, Mr. Tempest, but I am my Miss Smith, not yours."

A small smile quirked Mr. Tempest's attractive mouth. "You should have told me about this," he said. "As it is, you darned near got yourself fired."

"It would have been better than your outrageous solution."

"I'll admit I didn't consider all sides of the problem. I was hasty, but I only knew that I couldn't get along without you. In the office, I mean."

Burton Tempest reddened slightly. "Well, we'll have to go through with it, attend the dinner together. I'll be in conference all afternoon with Mr. Stringer at his hotel. I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to meet me in the Gold Room, about eight." His brown eyes were warm with a gleam Julie couldn't quite interpret, but for a delicious

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moment she felt like she really was Burt's fiancee.

"And now if you'll get me the figures on South American sales potentials, please. Oh, yes, and the key to my bank safe deposit box."

No, she was still merely his secretary, Julie mused forlornly . . .

Wearing a sheer wool dinner dress the color of young leaves, Julie arrived early, peered anxiously about the Gold Room. She simply had to see Mr. Stringer! She would explain the entire nonsensical affair to him, implore him to make no announcement of the spurious engagement. Then she could go on from there, to another job, without doubt, which would serve her right.

It had been very gallant of Mr. Tempest to say he couldn't get along without her—*in the office, of course*—but he'd have to learn to do so. There were other girls as capable as she.

She had a sudden dismal vision of the Other Girl, dim and nebulous as to face, but clasped firmly in Mr. Tempest's arms while he murmured the miracle words, "I love you—" Mabel? Susan? Well, whoever the new girl would be, Julie wouldn't be there to know and suffer when Burt fell in love. Because surely he would fall in love some day, wouldn't he?

He approached her now. "You look charming," he told her with every evidence of sincerity, and pinned a white orchid to her shoulder. He escorted her to a table—the other two occupants were Betsy Dolan and her bookkeeping adored one. Betsy's eyes widened enormously to see Julie with her boss.

"I came early to try to see Mr. Stringer," Julie whispered distractedly to Burt. "Where is he? We can't let him go on with this farce."

"He's having a rubdown in the Turkish bath," Burt answered and smiled amiably. "You got yourself into this, my dear, but don't let it throw you. I refuse to allow Mr. Stringer to deprive me of a perfect secretary. As soon as he's gone back to the home office, we'll break our 'engagement' and carry on."

"But there'll be gossip, Mr. Tempest!"

"It's beneath us," he said sweepingly. "And under the circumstances, you'd better learn to call me Burt, Julie."

"That's easy." She blushed. "That is—I always think of you as Burt."

"You do?" He seemed delighted. "Fine! I always think of you as—"

"I know. 'My girl, Miss Smith'," Julie said drily. "Oh, look, there's Mr. Stringer now, being seated at the speakers' table. I'll write him a note."

With her eyebrow pencil she scribbled on the back of a menu: "Don't announce engagement—will explain later. Julie Smith." Then she folded it and handed it to Burt.

"That waiter over there. Ask him to hand it to Mr. Stringer," she said.

"If you insist." Burt took the note, walked to a waiter several tables away, and spoke to him earnestly for a moment. The waiter glanced at Mr. Stringer, at Julie, and nodded to Burt. There, Julie thought in relief, that's that!

After dinner, Mr. Stringer rose and made his inspirational speech. "Strive—" he concluded dramatically, "with Stringer!" Mr. Stringer raised a modest, pudgy hand to silence the loud applause.

"And now," he declaimed, "I've news of interest to all of Stringer's happy family. As you are aware, I very much disapprove of light flirtations among my employes. I believe that extraneous interests impede the efficiency I count on from my workers. But we cannot, to quote the young man in the case, ignore love." He tasted the final word as if it were an unripe persimmon. Julie's toes curled within her green sandals and her palms went icy.

"To come to the point of Cupid's arrow, ha ha!—our district manager, Burton Tempest, and his secretary, Miss Julie Smith, are engaged. Perhaps if we give them a big hand, they'll take a bow."

"Gosh, that's wonderful!" Betsy Dolan sighed gustily and nudged Dick Fairbanks significantly with her elbow. "Isn't it, Dick?"

Julie's wide blue eyes beseeched Burt's. He fumbled with her left hand, slipped a ring on her finger, then pulled her to her feet.

"Let's take a bow, Julie," he muttered, a wicked glint in his eye. "You

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heard what the man said."

Dazedly Julie found herself bowing beside Burt, while applause and general hubbub roared in her ears. She managed a weak smile, then subsided into her chair. Through a mist of tears which she was unable to account for, she saw the fiery glaze of a diamond on her left hand.

"My grandmother left it to me, to give my fiancee when the time came," Burt explained in a whisper. "I got it out of the deposit box this afternoon. An engaged girl's got to have a ring."

Champagne appeared at the table and Julie found herself sipping it and accepting congratulations.

"To my fiancee," Burt said and raised a bubbling glass. Julie yearned to slap him. She was too worried and unhappy to even wonder who had ordered the wine.

This had gone much too far, she thought confusedly, and wished bitterly that she had never murmured that fateful "Of course, darling—"

After several dances with Burt, she could not help thinking how wonderful just being in his arms would be. If it were not for this nightmare of a hoax! Suddenly Mr. Stringer approached them, glancing at his watch.

"Hate to tear you from your sweetheart's arms," he said, heavily jovial, "but I'd like to continue this afternoon's conference, Tempest." He followed as Burt got Julie's wrap, found a cab and helped Julie into it.

Leaning inside the cab, "We mustn't disappoint Mr. Stringer," Burt said softly, and kissed her. He kissed her for quite a long time, during which stars sparkled along her veins, and her heart turned into a comet which whizzed alarmingly through bright space.

At last Burt took his mouth from hers, looked at her with startled eyes. "Gosh!" he remarked dazedly. "Julie—"

"It's the champagne," she said primly. "Please drive on, cabby." A quick glance over her shoulder revealed Burt standing there like a statue, staring after her.

Dizzily she pondered Burt's kiss. No doubt she should be angry with him, but this was somewhat difficult. To receive his kiss, she remembered with awful clarity, it had been necessary for her to lean a little forward.

If she was angry with anyone, it should be with herself. Only—and this was remarkable, she thought—she wasn't angry a bit. She was ridiculously thrilled over something that meant nothing. Nothing!

NEXT morning Julie paced the floor of Burt's office. Nervously she turned the ring on her finger. It was beautiful, a huge, old-fashioned rose-cut diamond set in heavy, ornate gold. She would give it to Burt the instant he came in, but there was no need to remove it till the last possible moment.

"Ah, there you are," she greeted him sternly, trying to ignore the fact that he was so darned handsome. "As soon as Mr. Stringer arrives, I intend to tell him the whole story. This has been entirely my fault, and I don't mind being fired at all. That is, I do mind being fired! Anyway, here is your ring."

Burt reached for her hands. "Don't, Julie," he pleaded. "I didn't know it until I kissed you last night, but I've loved you a long time. I just didn't have enough sense to know it."

"One kiss!" Julie scoffed, while her heart thudded dangerously. "Champagne!"

He took her in his arms and kissed her. It was much nicer, Julie thought dreamily, when she didn't have to lean forward.

"Two kisses," Burt said, his mouth tender. "A lifetime of kisses, if you'll have me, Julie. I love you. I think I knew it even before I kissed you. You see, instead of giving the waiter your note, I told him to bring champagne to celebrate our engagement."

"Is that what happened?" Julie asked faintly. "I love you, too, Burt. I always have." This might all be part of a crazy joke, she thought wildly, but she had to tell him she loved him.

"Then we're really engaged?" Burt asked eagerly.

"Yes. Oh, yes!"

The door opened and Mr. Stringer entered. "Ah!" he beamed paternally. "Hardly the time or place, young people,

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but I can understand. You'll be married soon, I trust. I'm extremely anxious, Tempest, for you to be off to South America immediately after your wedding, as I told you last night."

"South America?" Julie gasped.

"Yes. Hasn't your young man told you that now I know he's being married, I've decided on him to send to open our South American factory? I send only married men to our foreign holdings. They are not as susceptible as single men to the lure of the tropics, shall we say?" Mr. Stringer paused delicately. "A wonderful opportunity for Tempest, my dear. A wonderful advancement, in every way."

Her blue eyes narrowing coldly, Julie faced Burt Tempest. "So you didn't have enough sense to know you loved me," she said in chipped tones, "until you heard of the South American opening!" She stripped the diamond from her finger, and fumbled for the doorknob.

Burt sprang forward, stopped her. "Julie, it isn't so," he cried agitatedly. "The South American job has nothing to do with it. I don't give a hoot for the job. No, Mr. Stringer, of course that isn't true. I do want the job and I want Julie!"

Burt paused in confusion, drew his dark brows together, and glared at Mr. Stringer. "Look, boss, if you'll get out of here, maybe I can straighten this out. Scram, will you?"

His round face darkened by a frown, Mr. Stringer departed hastily. Burt put his arms around Julie's rigid slenderness, spoke with swift anguish. "I love you, Julie. Do believe I love you!"

She turned her unhappy face away. "How can I?"

"I'll tell Stringer I don't want to go to South America. I'll even quit Stringer altogether. Julie, please!—"

His eager mouth took hers, and she realized that the miracle she had dreamed of was happening. Burt was looking deep into her eyes, and he was saying huskily, desperately, "Julie, I love you."

The dream had come true. True, too, was the message of his kiss, not to be denied or doubted. She believed him. Her arms crept about his neck.

"We'll go to South America together," she told him. "Let's be married soon, darling, before something crazy and awful happens. Before Mr. Stringer fires us both. This merry-go-round we've been on since yesterday has me dizzy."

"I'm dizzy, too," Burt said. "I like it." He kissed her again, competently and without hurry, and the stars bubbled and fizzed in her blood like champagne.

The door opened once more to admit Mr. Stringer. "Look here," he demanded crossly, "whether you two ever make up your minds whether you're engaged or not, I've got to have the figures on the South American retail outlets. Now."

Burt released Julie from his embrace. "Yes, Mr. Stringer, right away. My girl—"

Julie caught her breath, paused in the doorway, listening.

"Miss Smith, my girl, will get 'em for you, Mr. Stringer."

Before she hurried away to the file cabinets, Julie sent Burt a flashing, joyous smile over her shoulder. The stars were in her eyes now.

Though she could no longer call him her own, Sherry Cochran carried a torch for Jim Brinton—and it lighted her path to romance in

HALF WAY TO HEAVEN

A Fascinating Novelet by ANN ARDEN

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Cupid's THE BOSS

by Mona Farnsworth

Lovely fashion designer Marty Hendricks finally finds her pattern for happiness!

MARTY flung down the case full of sketches she'd brought home and faced Steve across her drawing-board.

"It's ridiculous," she said. "Perfectly ridiculous."

"Is it?" asked Steve Weatherby. And they both knew they were off again. They also knew, both of them, that they'd completely lost count of the number of times they discussed this. Argued would be a better word. Fought would be best.

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"Would you give up your career when we got married if I asked you to?" Marty had shot this at him a good fifty times before. She knew just what he was going to stay. And he said it.

"Give up my career? Me, give up law? Of course not. That's different. Completely beside the point."

"Is it?" Marty eyed him and her eyes, that could be blue or gray or green, were a bright clear green. "Why is it different? I'm making as much money as you are so I could support both of us as well as you could. My future is certainly as bright as yours so there's no argument there. The only argument you can produce is that—"

"A woman's place is in the home," cut in Steve. "Well, it is. When I marry a girl—"

"The girl won't be me!" Marty was more angry than she'd ever been in these customary spats with Steve about this. She was so angry she saw everything, including Steve's face, her comfortable efficient home-studio, and the light that was a soft indirect haze, through a sort of bright red veil. The veil danced a little, making Steve's face dance with it and causing his nice mouth that wasn't grinning at all, to seem to grin diabolically. "I wouldn't marry you after this," raged Marty, tying it up for good, "if you were the last man on earth!"

"Fine," said Steve. "My sentiments exactly. When I get a wife I want a wife. Not a drawing-board. Good-night, Martha."

"Good-night," said Marty. And added furiously, "Good-by."

He went out, closing the door with dignity, but when the elevator door slammed, it slammed. Not because Steve had done anything to it but because that was its nature. And when Marty heard that sound it brought her to with a jolt.

The red haze cleared abruptly and a thin film of ice frosted over her. What had she done? What would life be without Steve? For two years, ever since the day she'd met him at Wylie Grant's cocktail party, he'd been the center of her universe, the hub around which her life revolved. Life without Steve—was it possible?

OF COURSE she wouldn't really have to face a life without Steve. This was just a quarrel. A little one, really. They'd had so many about this same thing and this was just another one.

But it wasn't just another one. And in the week, two weeks, that followed Marty had plenty of chance to find out what life would be like without Steve Weatherby. Because there was no Steve. He didn't phone, he didn't drop in either at her home studio in the Beaux Arts building or at her office studio on West 44th Street where the ultra fashion magazine she worked for, Modiste, had its offices. She didn't see him at all. It was as if the world contained no Steve.

And that's fine by me, she thought firmly as she swung around the corner of 44th into Fifth. This thing has grown to be such a bitter issue with us that a happy marriage would be completely impossible. And it's much better to have the break clean and final now—before anything more happens.

"Well, young lady!" Hands gripped her elbows, steadying her as the force of the collision threatened to topple her.

"I beg your pardon. I guess I wasn't looking where I was going." She glanced up at him and was surprised to find what a fog he seemed to be shrouded in.

"You're crying!" He stared down at her. "Your eyes are chock full of tears."

She laughed. It was a very ragged sound. "Is that why your face is so foggy?" she asked.

He took out a handkerchief, soft and clean and smelling of clean man-odors, fresh tobacco and shaving lotion and tweed and touched her eyes with it. The tears spilled over, running down her cheeks, and he had to do a pretty thorough mopping job.

"Now look at me," he demanded. "Can you see me now?"

"Yes," said Marty.

He grinned at her. "How am I? Not bad?"

"Not bad," Marty agreed. "Not handsome like a movie star, but a good face like—"

"A faithful dog?" he asked. And the brown eyes looking down into hers twinkled.

Marty nodded. "Something like that,"

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she said. And answered the twinkle with a laugh.

He sobered and looked very grave. "Do you think," he asked solemnly, "that I look faithful and reliable enough for you to drink a cocktail with?"

"If I drank cocktails," said Marty. "I'd no doubt be delighted. But I don't like the taste of 'em. When I'm roped into cocktail parties I'm the gal who stands around figuring where she can pour the drink somebody's given her."

"I like gals like that," said the man. "Come on and have some coffee then. The name is Hobe Tryon. Hobe is deceptive for Herbert. Now I've told you my heart's closest secret."

Marty laughed at him. It seemed a long time since she'd been so blinded by those tears.

"All right," she said. "I'm Marty Hendricks. The Marty is deceptive for Martha. A horrible name. A fit companion for Herbert. And I'd love coffee."

They went to a place Hobe knew about way over on Second Avenue. It was small and dark and run by a handsome man who looked like a bandit.

"The best coffee in New York," bragged Hobe. "See if it isn't."

It was and he sat back practically purring with pride. But they were well into their second cup when he cocked an eyebrow at her. "All right," he said. "You've told me you were born, oddly enough, right here in New York and that your parents died five and six years ago and that you design fashions for Modiste. But you haven't told me why you were all flooded with tears when you ran into me."

Marty eyed him. "If that is a question," she said. "It could be that it's none of your business." Then, because his eyes weren't curious at all but were very sympathetic and because they were terribly nice eyes anyhow, she answered the question he'd implied. "I'm in love with a goof," she told him. "And I'm so mad at him I could burn him at a stake—and if that isn't enough to make a girl cry I don't know what is."

HOBE nodded as if he understood perfectly all the ins and outs of the affair just from her few words. Then he said sagely, "People you love can make you awfully mad." He said it with such intensity that she flashed a glance at him.

"Are you in love too?"

He nodded. "Her name's Eleanor Meacham," he answered. "The Philadelphia Meachams. The Tryons—my family—also come from Philadelphia but it was West Philadelphia and we never bothered particularly to find out who our greatgrandfather was. An unforgivable sin in the eyes of a Meacham. So—" he shrugged but you could see the hurt in his eyes.

Marty felt a sudden and totally unexpected surge of indignation. "You mean she won't marry you because you don't go back to William Penn? You mean— Why the nasty little snob!"

"She's very beautiful," said Hobe. "When you've seen Eleanor you've seen the composite of all the best in the American Girl. She's perfect."

"Not if she's a snob, she isn't," said Marty and there was a surprising lot of snap in her tone. "My perfect American Girl is definitely not a snob. Also," she added firmly, "my perfect American Girl has a perfect right to pursue her own career after she's married if she wants to!"

"Oh," said Hobe understandingly, "is that your trouble?"

"It most certainly is," said Marty vehemently.

Slowly he grinned at her. "We have an awful lot in common," he observed. "Let's have dinner together."

They went to a place Hobe knew. It was very French, with onion soup and something mysterious with truffles in it and crêpe suzette—where there were red checked table cloths and candles stuck drunkenly in green bottles. Marty was amused with the place and gratified with the food and actually found herself entertained by Hobe.

Along about the tossed salad she found herself laughing. And not the tinny, artificial sound she'd been offering for a laugh either but the real thing, amused and ringing. After dinner they walked back across town and felt the softness and languor of New York in summer.

"It's cool up in my place and I've got

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some new records," Marty said suddenly.

"If that's an invitation," answered Hobe. "It's accepted."

Later, sitting on the floor with his back against a big taffeta pouf, he remarked, "There's a party at Tony Wallingford's. Ten gets you twenty that both Steve and Eleanor will be there."

Marty looked across at him. "Do we go?" she asked.

He eyed her. "Tony's parties never start till everyone else is brushing his teeth for bed, so you'll have time to dress. Wear something devastating."

Marty smiled, not too faintly, "So your Eleanor will be jealous?"

Hobe grinned. "I'm not too ugly a lad myself. There's a possibility of your Steve's blood pressure taking a small jump. Let's play it for all it's worth."

IT SEEMED that this Tony Wallingford was an institution. He was a scion of very high Society and, to boot, he'd spent his life fathering the Arts. His taste was catholic and his definition of art covered everything from a cartoon used to advertise suspenders to the most recent abstract, done in blazing golds and royal purples, of three suns and four diagonal lines.

Tony, by now, was definitely fiftyish, a tall, fine figure of a man who held the two worlds of Art and Society in the palm of his well-groomed hand. When Tony gave a party the world flocked to it.

"He ought to hire the ballroom at the Waldorf for it," said Hobe. "Even then it would probably overflow."

"He does pretty well with that house of his," said Marty.

And then Hobe went to his place to dress and Marty, standing several minutes at her open closet door, finally chose an ice green taffeta that was frosty cool and crisp and that did wonderful things for her copper-gold hair and her changeable eyes.

Hobe looked shocked when she opened the door for him.

"Great Caesar!" he said, "you're beautiful."

"Do you mean to say," mocked Marty, "that you didn't discover that the moment you saw me?"

"Don't be silly," said Hobe. "Come along."

The house of Tony Wallingford—one of the old enormous piles on upper Fifth Avenue—had been remodeled by him particularly with an eye to party-giving, since parties were the main interest of his life. He gave them, lavish, extravagant and zany, at the drop of a hat, for any excuse at all or no excuse whatsoever.

Now, even in midsummer, he'd run over from the London season to open the place for a party because Sissie Sims—one of his favorites—had just written a book which bid fair to be another best seller. If that didn't rate a party nothing did.

The house, when Hobe and Marty stepped out of the cab, was a veritable bonfire of light. Every window glittered and shone and the great front door was wide open with a pair of footmen in livery guarding it.

"It's always fun to find out how the other half lives," said Hobe and escorted her through the doorway with the footmen bowing quite grandly and into the wide and very splendid hall. "Do you see him?" he wanted to know.

The hall was crowded, the whole house was crowded probably, but, immediately, Marty saw him. He was standing beside the marble urn that crowned one of the newel posts of the enormous curved stairway and his eyes were searching the crowd, moving here and there swiftly.

Marty turned her back. "He's over there, by the stairs."

Hobe looked and made a noise in his throat. "Handsome lad," he observed. "Is he smart, too?"

"He's a lawyer," said Marty. "He's politically minded. His thought pattern runs, lawyer, district attorney, governor, President. And there's no place in that set-up for a wife with a career."

"To heck with him," said Hobe amiably. "Now me, I like a wife with a career. My thought pattern runs, illustrator, illustrator, illustrator and I could fit in a wife with a career easily." He slanted a look at her and she grinned up at him.

"Trying to improve my morale," she accused him. "All right. Fine. I'll keep

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the chin up and the upper lip stiff, don't worry. Does Eleanor have a career?"

SUDDENLY Hobe Tryon made a noise that was almost a snort. "That girl?" he asked. "She's never done anything in her life more careerful than tending a booth at a Junior League bazaar." And then he added, "There she is."

"Where?" Marty whirled, displaying very bad manners, and stared, displaying worse. Then, "Oh, my gosh," she said. "That girl?"

She was beautiful beyond all anyone could dream a girl could be. A golden girl, golden skin, golden-amber eyes and hair that looked like a wheat field with the hot gold of sun on it. Beside all this, she wore her beautiful clothes—frost white satin in this case—with a beautiful manner. Altogether she was a girl to stop traffic, clocks and hearts.

"Once you fell in love with a girl like that," said Marty, "you'd never be contented with any ordinary mortal."

"No—" said Hobe but it sounded oddly more like a question than a statement.

They went up to the third floor to dance. The whole third floor was a ballroom and the house, with people wandering up and down the tremendous branched staircase, looked like a movie set.

"The best music, without doubt, that money can buy," Hobe said, and took her into his arms.

He danced beautifully and they discovered that they danced beautifully together. Pretty soon they were dancing alone, in a cleared corner of the ballroom, while a small ring of admiring audience surrounded them.

"They're telling us we're good," murmured Hobe into her hair.

"Well—aren't we?" asked Marty and, tilting her head, laughed up into his eyes.

The music stopped and, as if he'd sprung up out of the floor itself, there was Steve.

"I'll have the next if you don't mind," he announced.

Marty lifted her chin. She'd dreamed for two weeks that something like this would happen but now that it had all she felt was anger. What did Steve think he was, anyhow? Did he think that all he had to do was crook a finger, make a demand, and she'd come running?

"Thanks, I do mind," she said quite clearly. "The next dance belongs to Hobe." And then she added very politely, "Have you two met? Hobe Tryon—Steve Weatherby."

The two met, shook hands and eyed each other with frank dislike. The music started up again and Marty moved her arms toward Hobe. He gathered her in and Steve walked off, his head high and angry, his hands balled into fists and held tight against his sides.

"You really love that man, don't you?" Hobe asked softly.

"Do I look it?" flamed Marty. "A man like that! Demanding—selfish—bossy! I wouldn't marry him if he were the last man walking."

Hobe said nothing. He just led her smoothly into the rhumba—and they cleared their corner of the floor again.

Steve didn't come near Marty again that night but she saw him twice more. Each time he was half the distance of a room away from her and both times he was with Eleanor!

"Now how in the world did they get together?" asked Marty, astonished.

"I introduced them," replied Hobe. "That time I went to bring you an ice. They were both looking kind of lonesome so I got them together." He smiled amiably and there was a touch of dreaminess in his eyes as if he were remembering something pleasant. "They seemed to like it."

"Oh," said Marty and waited for the waves of jealousy to rise to a crest. Certainly she should be jealous with Steve being exposed to anything as beautiful as that Eleanor.

She waited, but no jealousy rose. Oh, well, it was late—probably her reactions were slowed up. She smiled at Hobe.

"I'm glad they're having a nice time," she said.

NEXT morning, at the office, there was a state of expectancy as definite as the shudder of a drawn bowstring. Marty walked through it and she knew

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right away what it was. It had been hanging over everybody like the sword of Damocles for weeks now and, if everybody had the jitters this way, the sword was apparently on its way down.

For a second, walking toward her own office, Marty knew a slash of panic, Then her chin lifted. So all right! So Modiste was changing hands. So a new policy was coming in. But they'd still need designers wouldn't they? And wasn't she darn good? And, no matter who else they kept, wouldn't she be one that stayed?

"Don't be panicky, girl," she muttered to herself as she swung open her office door. "Remember, the only thing we have to fear is fear itself!" She whipped the door closed briskly and began to think very efficiently of the work she had to do for the day.

It was eleven o'clock when Steve called. Marty, recognizing his voice of course with the first tone, felt a twinge of—was it excitement? Triumph? Or just plain anger? She tried, in the instant, to sort out her emotions but she didn't have time. She couldn't know.

"Marty, will you have lunch with me?" Steve asked. He sounded very gentle and pleading.

"Well—" Marty answered, knowing she would but not wanting to sound that way.

Steve continued with the same gentleness, "I think, Marty—there's been an awful mistake somewhere. I mean it's been a tough two weeks for me. How has it been for you?"

"Tough enough," said Marty, and she was surprised to find that she felt as if she were talking about a Marty living in another life. It all seemed so far away. But she had missed Steve. Life had seemed empty and worthless!

Steve spoke again, and his tone was very tender, "Then you will have lunch with me? You'll meet me at Toby's?" Toby's was an English grill where the steaks were black on the outside and rare in the middle and where the coffee had no doubt been made in heaven.

"Yes," said Marty. "I'll meet you at Toby's. One o'clock." She hung up and smiled to herself. So Steve was coming around. This was what she'd been waiting for. She caught sight of herself in the sheet of plate glass she'd hung opposite her desk and smiled and bowed at her reflection, shaking her hands and congratulating herself.

Then she sobered and looked at herself very thoughtfully. "Well," she said out loud. "Well!"

Toby's, with its oak wainscotted walls and its sedate row of dignified portrait photographs of its dignified patrons, was a favorite with Steve.

"Dignity," he'd say. "It's a good thing—dignity."

"If it doesn't make a stuffed shirt out of you," Marty had told him and made a face, turning up her nose and turning down her mouth, to show him what she thought of stuffed shirts.

She thought of that now as she sat in the leather lounge waiting the minute it took for Steve to arrive. But of course Steve wasn't a stuffed shirt—not really. It was just that he was so anxious to succeed and, she supposed, dignity was necessary to a man who had his young but determined eye on the governor's chair and on the White House.

Steve came and he took both her hands in his, bending over her. His eyes were pools of adoration.

"Marty—" And then softly, "I'd forgotten you were so lovely."

They had their steaks and they talked and all the words Steve said were just right. But something was wrong. Marty thought, What is it? For heaven's sake, what is it? It was as if one man in a full orchestra was playing just a shade off key. Or maybe she was just plain crazy.

WHEN she got back to the office at two, she found the place in a turmoil. The ax had begun to fall. There would be no more "Vanity on the Rue de la Paix" department so Maude Frazier was on the skids. They were telescoping "World Wide Fashions" and "Gossip on the Rialto" so Pauline Proctor, with her whole office force, was going. There were other changes, other long faces. Marty went on into her office feeling low again. Good gravy, was she so indispensable?

Hobe called up and she poured her troubles out to him. She didn't pour them, really. The troubles seem to bub-

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ble out all by themselves.

"What you need," said Hobe, "is a spot of dancing. How about stopping the show at El Morocco to-night? Wear your fanciest and we'll go to town. I'll be by for you at seven-thirty for dinner."

"Fine," said Marty and she was surprised at how cheered up she suddenly felt.

She wore white. Dull, chalk white that made her throat and arms look delicately golden and that, with her hair in an up-sweep and bound with a Grecian fillet, gave her a definitely Greek Goddess suggestion.

"Hm-m-m-m," said Hobe, when she opened the door for him. "Gee whiz! I mean— Hm-m-m-m!"

"You know," said Marty twinkling at him, "that's the very nicest compliment I ever received."

They went to El Morocco and they did clear the floor. It was fun. More fun than it had been at Tony Wallingford's party the night before.

"Boy! Let's go into this professionally," Hobe remarked. "I bet I'm better at it than I am at illustrating."

That wasn't too good a remark because it reminded Marty of her problem.

"If I'm fired," she said, "maybe I'll take you up. Marty and Hobe, dance team extraordinaire. Or would it be Hendricks and Tryon? That's more dignified."

"Dignified?" repeated Hobe. "Dignified! Lady—I'm too young to bother about dignity. Wait till I'm fifty, or at least forty-five before you worry me about that."

Marty thought, Steve's twenty-six and he's worried about it now. And then she thought, well, so all right. Hobe isn't aiming to be President either. She smiled up at him suddenly.

"Hobe," she said, "you're an awfully good sort. It's very comfortable being with you."

"Uh-huh," he said. "Good old old-shoe Hobe, they call me. In fact—" he slanted a look at her, "they throw me with all the rest of the old shoes after the bride and groom when they go off on their honeymoon."

"I had lunch with Steve to-day," she said for some reason. And then wondered why she'd said it.

Hobe grinned, twisting his mouth wryly. "That's what I mean," he said.

She had luncheon with Steve the next day too. He took her to his university club and she remembered that he'd proposed to her there. He probably meant her to remember. He watched her as if he were trying to find out whether or not this had a special meaning for her. It did—but not the way he thought.

She was thinking of all Steve had meant to her then, before the little things about him got on her nerves. This dignity that was so cold and wooden. His constant struggle for perfection in small things had made him, she thought now, almost old-maidish. Then there were all the battles they'd had about this business of her career.

Thinking of that day when Steve had first proposed, was like remembering a dream—a particularly beautiful and rose-colored dream, but a dream just the same. It wasn't Steve as he really was. She might just as well wake up and face it.

AND when, she thought confusedly, did I begin to see Steve as he really is? When did this business of his being a bit of a stuffed shirt begin to dawn on me? It had dated, she realized clearly now, from her knowing Hobe.

There was something about Hobe, some honest heartiness, some clear sincerity that demanded the same qualities in other people. And Steve didn't come up to Hobe's clear and sincere standards. Steve's standards were those dictated by pride and vanity and ambition.

"Well!" said Marty out loud and stared at him across the immaculate white cloth of the club table as if she'd never seen him before.

"So that's all settled," said Steve and smiled at her with almost a touch of smugness.

"Wh-what's all settled?" asked Marty. And realized with dismay that Steve, no doubt, had been talking all the time she'd been so wrapped up in her thoughts. A fine thing. She couldn't even keep her mind on Steve's conversation.

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"It's all settled that our engagement is on again," he said, answering her question. "This time—" he smiled at her very charmingly, "I'm going to tie you up with a ring. No more shilly-shallying for me. I've missed you too much."

"Why Steve!" said Marty, surprised. Steve, the restrained and dignified making an admission like this. And then she said quickly, "But look, Steve! I shan't ever marry you unless I can have my freedom to work, if I want to work. I just shan't! What are you smiling at? You look like a cat just turning away from a canary cage with feathers on his mouth."

Steve stopped smiling. It was as if he'd wiped it off his face and as if it had never been there. His eyes were very sober suddenly.

"I guess you can work," he said amiably. "If you want to."

"Well!" said Marty. And then she thought, This is what he'd said when I said Well! before. This is where I came in.

She glanced at her watch and was oddly relieved to find it was late and she'd have to hurry. She stood up quickly, gathering her bag and gloves.

"So it's all settled," Steve said, as he'd said before. And it was a statement.

Marty did not fully understand her terrible reluctance to say anything, "I've got to think, Steve. I've got to think!" And then she added with quick firmness, "Don't bother about taking me back to the office. I'm so late now I'll just grab a cab at the door and get there as fast as possible." And she went, almost running.

Two things were waiting for her when she got back. For one, the phone was ringing and for another there was an inter-office memorandum on her desk that she was to go to Morton's office at once.

She attended to the phone first because that was right there, ringing demandingly, but she did it with a faintly sick heart. Stanley W. Morton was the new owner of Modiste who was doing the reorganizing. She fought down that rising panic while she picked up the instrument.

It was Hobe. "Bad day," he announced. "It's half gone and this is the first time I've heard your voice."

"It's your own fault," she told him. "You could have called this morning if you'd wanted to. I was here." And her voice sounded suddenly happy, with a note of laughter in it. It was so good to talk to Hobe.

"Couldn't call you before," he said. "Eleanor called up and she wanted me to drive her up to Bronxville. We just got back."

"Oh," said Marty. There was no laughter in her tone now. She felt suddenly cross and there was a hot pain in her throat.

"I'm so glad you and Eleanor had a nice time," she said tightly. Then she added, making her words clear and hard, "I had lunch again with Steve. He says if I'll marry him I can go on with my own career. He says he's even missed me that much."

"Well!" said Hobe, and it suddenly struck Marty that, between them, they'd kind of overworked that word. "So—are you going to marry him?" he asked very quickly.

"Yes!" answered Marty with sudden viciousness. "Yes—I am!"

Then she slammed the telephone into its cradle and burst into tears.

THE weeps only lasted a terrible, heart-tearing instant. Then Marty whipped her head up. There was tight fury in her lips and fire in her eyes. If anybody thought she was upset because Hobe had spent the morning with Eleanor, because he was obviously pretty pleased with himself for doing it. Without a doubt, they'd patched everything up between them. So if anybody thought all that bothered her, Marty, they had another think coming. Well! She hadn't fallen in love with Hobe and don't think she had. She wouldn't give him a tumble if—

"Oh, to heck with Hobe Tryon!" she said out loud and smashed her fist down on the desk to show how much she meant it.

Her smashed fist made the inter-office memorandum bounce and flutter and, hastily putting her face together again where her flash-flood of tears had

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smeared it, she took a deep breath and made off for Mr. Morton's office.

He was a younger man than she'd expected and nice looking in a smoothly successful way. He was very barbered and tailored and his face was a polite mask.

"Ah, Miss Hendricks." He rose and gestured toward a chair and when she sat down he sank back again into the leather recesses of his own chair. "It occurred to me," he said, "that it was time we got acquainted."

"How do you do," said Marty and smiled as bewitchingly as she knew how. Maybe that really was all he had on his mind. If so this might prove a very pleasant ten minutes. It was, of course, necessary to get acquainted with your department heads. Marty relaxed just a little.

"Your work no doubt was very satisfactory to Elbert Frayne," Mr. Morton said. Elbert Frayne had been the previous owner-editor. "I am sure you are brilliant." He looked at her.

Marty found a thorough dislike of this man knotting within her. His eyes were like gray fish. His smile was thin.

"I am very fond of my work, Mr. Morton," she said. "I think one always does well with work one is fond of." She sounded prim. She sounded priggish and silly. She smiled at him mechanically.

Mr. Morton tapped on the edge of his vast desk with a pencil. He nodded his head till he looked just like a wound-up doll.

"No doubt—no doubt," he said. He tapped three times. Then, "I am—believe me—very sorry to do this." He didn't look at her. He looked only at the pencil.

Marty said nothing. She didn't say, Do what? because she knew. She knew perfectly well and her fingertips got cold and her cheeks got hot while a stifling anger began to beat in her blood. How did he dare do this to her! She was good, darn it. She knew she was good! Elbert Frayne had never had anything for her but praise. Now this—this fish-eyed tailor's dummy!

"You will have two weeks to tie up whatever ends you may have and we are giving you a month's salary dating from today—" was all that he said.

"I have no ends to be tied up in two weeks," said Marty. "And I've absolutely no use for any salary I don't earn. I'm sure you can find someone to do your Christmas issue far better than I could. Good afternoon, Mr. Morton." And bad 'cess to you, she added as she closed the door after her.

So all right, she was being silly and childish. She was doing the equivalent of flinging herself on the floor and kicking her heels in a tantrum. But the whole thing made her so darn' mad! She was good. She knew she was. And if that blind stupid fool back there in the custom-made clothes and the tight smile didn't know it she'd show him. By heck, she would show him!

She practically ran back to her office and yanked up the phone.

"Sam?" she asked when she got her number. "Sam—this is Marty. And Sam, if you're half the editor I think you are you'll appreciate the opportunity to get the best designer in the business to work for you. If you know your onions—"

"Good gravy," said Sam. "Did that jackass give you the gate? Come on over. Let's talk."

"Ha-ha," said Marty. "Prepare to toss out the red carpet for me. I'm on my way." And, whistling in a most unladylike way through her teeth, Marty slapped on her hat and went out to hail the cab that would take her to Sam's offices—the office's of Mayfair, Modiste's arch rival.

NEVERTHELESS, Marty didn't get a job that afternoon. Sam was a man who liked to intrigue a bit and hold his series of important conferences. But when she finally took the bus home, Marty was satisfied that it was as good as in the bag. She even hummed a blithe tune as she unlocked the door of her apartment.

She was fluffing up her hair in front of the silver mirror that hung between the two tall windows when the phone rang. She made herself walk toward it slowly. It wouldn't be Hobe. It couldn't be. Hobe would be busy pursuing his Eleanor.

So, as long as she'd negatively known

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it couldn't be Hobe, it wasn't. It was Steve.

"It's so long since I've seen you," said Steve tenderly. "How about my picking you up for dinner?"

"Well—" said Marty, not wanting to go but not wanting to hurt Steve either. After all he'd done nothing that deserved hurt. He was just being himself and if it was a stuffed shirt self that, for some reason, she'd been blind to before, but now saw all too clearly, that was hardly his fault.

In the face of her thoughtful hesitation, he spoke. "All right, darling, I'll pick you up in half an hour. How about some lobster at the Sea Bar?" And he hung up.

She couldn't get him back to tell him not to come, so she'd have to go. She'd better get ready. But she moved half-heartedly and found herself wondering an awful lot where Hobe and Eleanor were going to eat to-night. By no sort of sensible coincidence would it be the Sea Bar. Even if it were, what good would it do?

It wasn't, of course. Marty looked all over the place when she went in with Steve and no Goddess of Chance had sent Hobe where she could look at him. And, she lashed herself crossly, what good would it do to look at him? Don't be a fool.

When they were settled in their booth, Steve asked genially, "Have you had a good day?"

Marty twinkled suddenly, thinking of her day, and for just that second she forgot Hobe.

"I had a wonderful day!" she said jubilantly. And she laughed with the sound of a brook dancing in the spring.

Steve turned oddly white. His jaw slacked a little and his eyes looked glassy.

"You mean Poke didn't fire you? You mean—" He stopped, seemed to swallow hard, then finally got control over his eyes and jaw. Then he laughed two notes. "I mean—there are lots of people being fired in your place, aren't there?"

Marty hadn't taken her eyes from his face. She'd watched him and waited for him to stop talking. Well, she thought. Well! When he'd finished she smiled at him. Very sweetly.

"So you call him Poke, do you?" she asked. "How long have you known him? College?"

"Yes," said Steve. He watched her warily.

Marty murmured gently, "A most fitting nickname, if you ask me. Poke Morton. He's a very Pokey fellow. And what," she murmured still more gently, "have you got on him that he was willing to fire his best designer because you told him to?"

"Oh, look here, Marty! You make it sound evil. You're twisting—"

"What?" asked Marty. "What am I twisting? The facts? You tell me this noon that you don't mind my working, if I want to. You figure that if I lose the best job I've ever had I'll get so discouraged I'll give up. You fool! How little you know me." She leaned across the table and pounded it gently with her fist to emphasize her words.

"Do you know what I did when your stinking pal Pokey Morton fired me? I went out and got a much better job with Mayfair. So that for your nasty double-crossing methods, Steve Weatherby! And that for you!"

Marty nearly dislocated her fingers snapping them twice like that with such furious force but, riding north in the cab she'd picked up, she didn't care a fig about the pain. Anything was worth finding out, beyond a doubt, what Steve was.

IMAGINE being married to a man like that! Imagine. And she might have gone along taking him for granted if it hadn't been for Hobe. Hobe, simple, sincere, no-fuss-and-bother Hobe who, by his plain unassuming honesty would show up anyone who was any less.

Heaven bless Hobe! She sat in the corner of her taxi and let herself think about him for the first time that day. She was in love with Hobe. She might as well face it because it was a fact she'd have to live with for a long time. There weren't two Hobes. There couldn't be.

No two men who were so—so Hobe-like. And if she'd lost this one to that out-of-this-world beautiful Eleanor! Of course no man could be blamed for falling for such a girl. She, Marty, would just have to get used to loving a man

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she couldn't have. Just drag the fact out from its hiding place in her heart and face it.

The cab swung in from the Avenue of the Americas and slid to the curb in front of the Beaux Arts Building.

"Hello," said Hobe. "I began to think you'd had the nerve to have dinner with somebody else."

Marty stared. She tried to say something but her mouth was suddenly cotton dry and her throat had closed entirely.

"Lord, you look stupid with your eyes all bugged like that!" Hobe said. "But maybe it's just another sign that you love me. Is it?"

"Yes," whispered Marty, finding it possible to say the one word. "Yes."

Hobe grinned. "Boy, am I keen! You know—" he shoved her back into the cab and got in beside her, "Yesterday noon when you told me you'd had lunch with Steve I got so jealous I could have murdered that lad easy. So I thought, thought I, Well! If that has this effect on me, suppose I tell her I have had lunch with Eleanor and see what it does to her?" He said to the cabman, "Drive on—anywhere."

"So you did." Light was beginning to dawn for Marty. A beautiful light. Clear and blinding and chock full of rose color. "So you told me you'd been with Eleanor all the way to Bronxville, you evil one! And it had the same effect on me!"

"I knew it!" chortled Hobe. "Oh, boy! I knew it. You got so mad and when you said you were going to marry Steve you were positively vicious. So I knew you loved me."

"Odd reasoning," said Marty. But she didn't care. She didn't care about anything. Hobe was beside her. Hobe's arms were around her. Hobe's mouth was coming close—and closer—to hers!

When it finally touched hers, and when all the stars of all the heavens exploded in her heart, the cab was stuck by lights in a jam at Forty-second and Fifth with half the world milling around it. But neither Hobe nor Marty knew it.

And they wouldn't have cared if they had!

Love's Reflection

When I looked in the mirror, dear,
Before our love was nigh,
"How cute I am," I cried with glee,
"That's me, myself and I!"

When I look in the mirror, now,
My head is all awhirl,
I do not see myself at all—
"Just look, there's Johnny's girl!"

—HELEN ARDSLEY

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Romance Came From College

By RUTH ANDERSON

After ten years of crying on the same man's shoulder, the strangest things can happen!

IT WAS a lovely summer day in Larchmont, and in all of Westchester and in New York for that matter. Warm, but not too hot, with a gentle breeze rustling the bright green branches of the big trees. A delightful day and Nancy Carson sat on the porch of her house and suffered in silence as she gazed pensively out at the sparkling waters of the Sound.

A smart looking maroon convertible turned into the driveway and came to a halt at the porch. A tall, good-looking dark-haired young man dressed in a white linen suit got out of the car.

"Don't cheer too loudly, it's only the old family watchdog," Vincent McAllister said, smiling at the pretty blonde girl in the sweater and slacks as he came up on the porch. "You know—often a visitor, but never a romance."

"Go away, Vince," Nancy said. "My heart is broken, and I want to be alone."

"Not again," said Vince, paying no attention to her order to leave. He dropped into a chair. "Who is it this time, Nancy?"

"Harry Warden," Nancy said. "I'm

They strolled around to the garden

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simply mad about him and he doesn't give a hoot for me."

"Showing he is lacking in education and horse sense," said Vince. "He should not only give a hoot about you but also a holler. Lovely blonde hair, fascinating big blue eyes, a figure that is really something. Yes, even a touch of brains in your brighter moments."

"Flatterer!" Nancy laughed, and was surprised to find she was feeling much better. "You are such a comfort, Vince."

"Good!" Vince got to his feet. "Let's take a walk, and you can tell me all. You know I can't stand crowds."

There wasn't anyone within sight for two blocks in any direction but Vince completely ignored that little detail. He glanced at the gloves that Nancy wore.

"I was pulling weeds out of the flower garden out back," Nancy said. "When I saw Harry drive by with Marion Trippett, I just couldn't go on working so I came around here on the porch. Mother and Dad are at the Yacht Club this afternoon."

"Alone at last," Vince said, leering at her and stroking an imaginary mustache. "Little do you know how I have waited for this moment, me proud beauty. At last I have you in my power."

"What—what do you mean?" Nancy asked rising to her feet and moving away from him in pretended fear. "Don't look at me like that. Don't you dare come closer—heaven will protect the working girl!"

"Danger—girl at work," Vince said.

HE STEPPED swiftly toward her and caught her in his arms. Before she realized his intentions he kissed her squarely on the lips. In all the ten years she had known him Vince had never kissed her like that. It left her breathless and with her heart beating much faster than usual.

"Surprise!" Vince said as he quickly released her and stepped back. "I don't believe that was in the script."

"Neither do I," said Nancy. "I guess we better had take that walk. You kissed me like you really meant it, Vince."

"Naturally," Vince said lightly. "For ten years man and boy, nice fellows both of them, I have adored you madly when I thought about it. But then I only do my serious thinking on Wednesdays."

"That's too bad since this is Saturday." They walked down the porch steps and strolled around to the garden in the rear of the house. Nancy frowned as she suddenly remembered something. "Spaulding Snell!" she exclaimed. "I nearly forgot all about him."

"How could you with a name like that?" Vince asked. "What is Spaulding Snell, and why?"

"A young man Dad invited to spend the weekend with us," Nancy said. "The son of one of Dad's old college classmates. I've never met him. What time is it, Vince?"

"Two-thirty," Vince said, glancing at his wristwatch. "Why?"

"I was supposed to meet Spaulding at the train," said Nancy. "But it is too late now. The train got in half an hour ago. What will he think of me?"

"By this time he has probably lost his faith in humanity and decided never to trust a woman again," Vince said. "Of course we could take my car and dash to the station, but if Spaulding has any sense he will take a taxi here when he finds there is no one at the station to meet him."

"Dad says he is very bright," Nancy said. "Spaulding is an archaeologist."

"Well, rattle my bones," said Vince. "Looks like you are going to have a jolly time flitting among the fossils." He looked at her intently as she stood at the side of the garden. "But at the moment you seem strangely mild about Harry. What happened?"

"Harry gave me quite a rush this spring," Nancy said. "You were away supervising that construction job out West, so you didn't know anything about it. I was sure that I was in love with him. But just a week or so ago before you got back he suddenly dropped me."

"Without an explanation?" Vince asked.

"Not the slightest," said Nancy. "And he has been running around with Marion Trippett ever since. Naturally I have too much pride to ask what was wrong. Just the day before yesterday I met Harry and he said, 'Congratulations!—I hear the big romance in your life is arriving this weekend.' Harry hurried away before I could ask any

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questions, and I still don't know what he meant."

"I just had a quaint thought," Vince said. "Your Dad and Harry spend quite a lot of time at the Yacht Club since they both own sail boats. Maybe your father talked up this Spaulding Snell to such an extent that Harry has the idea Spaulding is the big man in your life?"

"That must be it!" said Nancy. "Dad certainly has been giving Spaulding a big buildup to everyone. He even told me that I might find him just the right man for me."

They stopped talking as a thin bald-headed man wearing horn-rimmed glasses and carrying a traveling bag appeared around the corner of the house. He gave a shout as he saw them and hurried toward them.

"Little Nancy!" he said. "I'd know you anywhere from the picture your father sent us. I'm Spaulding Snell."

Since Nancy was five feet seven the "Little Nancy" didn't seem quiet convincing. Because of the bald head and the glasses, Spaulding looked like he might be any age from twenty-five to forty-five.

"Spaulding!" she said, holding out her hand as he dropped the bag and came closer. "So nice to see you. I'm terribly sorry about not meeting you at the train."

"That's quite all right, dear child," Spaulding said. "I was sure something detained you so I took a cab." He took her hand and drew her to him and kissed her on the forehead. "It seems like I have known you for ages."

MCALLISTER had been watching them with a slight frown on his brow.

"Father, dear father, you've come home to me now," Vince said to no one in particular.

"Oh, yes!" Spaulding Snell looked at Vince. "And is this the boy friend?"

"Why, no, I mean that is—Spaulding, this is Vincent McAllister." Nancy was suddenly quite confused.

"An old friend of the family," Vince said dryly as the two men shook hands. "Call me 'Rover' and I bark and wiggle my ears."

"You can't fool me!" Spaulding said with all the coyness of a dancing elephant. "This younger generation—so poker-faced about their love affairs. There was a time—but that is not to be." He ended with a sigh.

"I guess I better run along now," Vince said. "I'm sure that you and Spaulding have a lot to talk about, Nancy."

Nancy found she didn't want Vince to leave. She dreaded the idea of being alone with Spaulding. He seemed so stuffy and old fashioned. And her father had told her that his old friend's son was such a brilliant and amusing young man! Spaulding hardly acted the part.

Besides she kept remembering Vince's lips pressed against her own—there had been something so unexpectedly thrilling about that kiss. She hadn't recovered from the shock of it even yet.

For the past ten years Vince had been a vital part of her life. He was always dropping around to her house when he was home. She had always confided in him, told him all about her love affairs, and he had proved a comforting and understanding friend.

"Must you leave, Vince?" she asked. "Do stay a little longer."

"By all means do, Vincent," said Spaulding. "If Nancy will be kind enough to show me to my room I would like to freshen up a bit."

"All right," said Vince as they walked around to the front of the house with Spaulding again carrying his bag. "I'll stay."

"Splendid," said Spaulding.

Nancy took Snell upstairs and showed him the guest room he was to occupy, while Vince waited on the porch.

"Mother and Dad are at the Yacht Club," Nancy said. "But they should be back soon. They will be so glad to see the son of Dad's old class-mate?"

SNELL nodded. "The son of John's old class-mate," said Spaulding. He laughed. "So that's it. I wondered why you seemed a bit puzzled and surprised. I'm Spaulding Snell, Senior, your father's old friend. There was a change in plans at the last moment. Junior was coming to visit you for the week-

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end but he eloped with a girl he was madly in love with last night. I didn't learn about it until this morning."

"I—I thought you were rather old for your age," Nancy said dazedly. "I mean rather mature for a boy of twenty-four.'

"I hope your parents won't mind when they learn I came out here for a weekend visit instead of my son," said Spaulding Snell. "I have been so anxious to see John and your mother and you of course, dear child."

"I'm sure they will be delighted," said Nancy. "I'll go down and tell Vince the mistake we made."

"No, don't do that," said Spaulding. "That young man is in love with you. I'm sure of it. Has he ever told you so?"

"Why, no, he hasn't," Nancy said, finding the idea that Vince might be in love with her a new and delightful thought. "I'm sure you must be mistaken about that, Mr. Snell."

"Call me Spaulding." He smiled. "It makes me feel so young and carefree. Since I was able to fool you into thinking I was my own son, suppose we keep up the deception—at least until John and Susan get here. There was a time when I hoped that you and Junior might meet and fall in love, but that hope has vanished now."

"I'm sorry," Nancy said.

"You're not really—and it hardly could be expected that you would be," said Spaulding. "How long have you known young McAllister?"

"Ten years," said Nancy. "He really is an old friend."

"And doubtlessly you have told him all about your romances with other young men?"

"Why, yes." Nancy looked at Spaulding in surprise. "How did you know?"

"His remark about calling him Rover and he would bark and wiggle his ears," said Spaulding. "There was a touch of bitterness in that. He is quite sure you couldn't possibly ever be in love with him."

"Oh, is that so," snapped Nancy. "He needn't be so sure of that."

"Good!" Spaulding smiled. "Now scream."

"Do what?" asked Nancy blankly.

"Scream," said Spaulding calmly. "Then rush downstairs and tell Vince that I kissed you and it frightened you."

"But you didn't, and even if you did it wouldn't frighten me," Nancy said.

"Your father was honor man in his class," said Spaulding. "Don't tell me his daughter isn't also bright."

"Oh!" Nancy said. "I see."

She uttered a wild scream and then rushed down the stairs. Vince came rushing in from the porch and they both reached the hall at the same time. Nancy flung herself into his arms.

"Nancy darling," Vince said, holding her close. "What happened? What's wrong?"

"Spaulding!" Nancy gasped. "He kissed me."

"Why the old goat," snapped Vince. "He should be ashamed of acting that way, particularly as he is your father's old friend."

"You knew it was Spaulding Snell Senior and not the son?" demanded Nancy in surprise. "You're so smart, Vince."

"Not smart enough," said Vince. "If I had been, I would have asked you to marry me long before this instead of hanging around and—" He broke off:

"And barking and wiggling your ears," Nancy finished for him. "Come to think of it you wrote me that you wouldn't be home from that job out West until this weekend and you came back a whole week earlier. Why was that?"

"Because I found I just couldn't go without seeing you any longer," Vince said. "Remember I said in my letter that I was just as mad about you as you were about me. You know, always the light and ponderous touch. Laughing with tears in my eyes or some such blah!"

"That was quite a letter," Nancy said. "Though I realized you were joking of course I almost believed it." She gasped. "That letter—that is what has been wrong with Harry."

"Hum," said Vince. "I didn't write to Harry."

"Of course not," said Nancy. "But I lost your letter. I must have left it in Harry's car. He read it and decided we were in love. That's why he dropped

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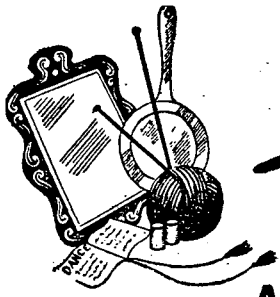

Listen Girls!

A CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

A MORNING shower is the perfect way to start your day—it leaves you brisk and wide awake. Not even Miss America herself can look good with droopy lids and a sleep-drawn face. Teeth should be brushed at least twice a day.

Run the tip of your tongue over the front of your teeth. Feel a rough coating? Your teeth need brushing again.

Winter or summer, always apply a deodorant when dressing. Nothing mars femininity more quickly than the obvious lack of a deodorant. Talc, cologne, skin refresher —all give a light, pleasant touch of fragrance.

Comb out your curls with a hairbrush. Though it may take a few minutes longer, the curls look neater and a hairdo stays in place much longer.

Apply morning makeup in daylight. Artificial light can make a startling difference in tone and emphasis. If you use a powder foundation in makeup, choose one slightly darker than your skin to avoid a pasty look. Blend it evenly on face and neck. Stopping at the chin line gives an odd—and undesirable look. Apply powder lightly over the foundation. Hurry over the places where the powder is likely to cake. Later in the day do a renewal on both foundation and powder rather than attempting to patch things up with powder.

Apply rouge with masterful understatement. It can be one of the largest mishaps in makeup.

Lipstick should harmonize with the color you are wearing, as well as flatter your own coloring.

Busy as you are, you can take care of all the little details that add up to personal beauty. It's not black magic, either—just sensible planning—careful scheduling of time. It's getting up ten minutes earlier in the morning—starting to dress for your shopping trip or date five minutes earlier. Personal loveliness is a part of your daily life!

Before you walk out your front door check these items: shoes polished?—stocking seams straight?—shoulders thoroughly brushed?—nails unchipped? — clothes spotless?—gloves clean?—hemlines even?

Flowers for Milady

Springtime is flower time—and if you like cut flowers about your house, here are some tips that will lengthen the life of cut flowers by hours—even days.

Cut flowers need immediate attention. Flowers kept out of water for any length of time lose much of the power to absorb water and therefore wilt rapidly. Put the flowers in deep water in a cool place for an

hour or two before arranging; overnight in a cool basement is even better.

When cutting stems to arrange the bouquet, use a sharp knife. Scissors often crush many of the little water channels in the stem, decreasing the water intake. Holding the stems under water while cutting is unnecessary. Heavy, woody stems should be split for two or three inches at the end. Most chrysanthemums need this treatment,

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as do all fruit tree branches being forced for their blossoms.

Changing the water and cutting the stems every day is a nuisance. If all excess foliage below the water line is removed when first arranging the bouquet, the water can be changed every other day instead of daily.

Flowers do best in a cool place. The higher the temperature the more moisture flowers lose and the quicker they wilt. Drafts and hot air from open registers and radiators are fatal.

If it is necessary to keep flowers in a warm room during the day, put them in a cool place at night.

Flowers with a milky juice such as poinsettias or poppies will benefit if the ends are plunged into boiling water for a minute or two—or the ends singed over an open flame. Protect the blossoms from the heat. Cut peonies, poppies and iris before they have completely opened. They'll keep color and petals longer.

Adding salt, vinegar, aspirin, etc., to the water does little to make the flowers last longer. Your florist can provide you with a good flower preservative. But chemicals are not cure-alls for droopy flowers. Good care is the best insurance for a lovely, long-lasting bouquet.

New Short Hair Fashions

The straight, forward-combed gamin hair cut is by no means your only choice among the new short hair fashions. Now that short hair is generally accepted, many variations are beginning to appear. Most of them are softer, prettier and more feminine than the first most extreme cuts.

The extremely short, shingled back, for instance, is just about out. Instead there are lines which brush the side hair high and away from the face instead of forward. The soft full double bang adds even more to the pretty and feminine effect. A sleek and pert coiff is not severe nor masculine. It's neat—not naughty. A light permanent provides body to hold the shape, rather than to provide curls.

But long or short, be sure your hair is one of your shining attributes. Know and practise the prime requisite for beautiful hair. Brush with fervor and be repaid with results that are no less than dreamy. Normal hair, with sufficient brushing, and a couple of minutes of scalp massage each day, does not require shampooing more than once every week or ten days.

Hints for Career Girls

If you are an efficient career girl, look and act the part. Good looking gals are a business asset—but we don't mean the fluffy creature who is so beauty conscious that she becomes a trial and a bother. She spends too much time on beauty props—and she simply doesn't belong with people who keep their noses close to the grindstone.

If you are out to bring home the bacon and eggs, try to fit into the business picture. Plain dresses are smarter than fussy ones. Don't be tempted by little numbers that carry too much decoration. Away with fussy ornaments—you can indulge that fancy when you're off on an evening date for an hour or two of fun.

We suggest, too, a not too brilliant nail polish. A subdued color means that the big boss won't have his eyes on your fingers and a scowl on his face when he dictates to you.

Lots of girls have kicked themselves out of good jobs through just plain carelessness. There are too many of them who neglect offensive perspiration odor. That type is just a social outcast. Some kind person should take her aside and tell her the facts of smelling pretty.

Suit Yourself

Suits almost as soft as dresses, and dresses which are plainly meant to wear instead of suits, along sunny spring avenues, are what the smart shops are showing. So very, very useful, too—you can equip them with haughty accessories, or take them out for a business day with the bandbox primness of white cotton gloves and simple hats.

Judging by the spring preview, linen suits (and later on, linen sheath dresses) will be very popular. Most of the linens have been treated to discourage easy wrinkling and we're sure you'll want to include at least one in your wardrobe.

And while you're out shopping—should you be on the plump side, remember that the right kind of colthes can do much to disguise those overweight lines. Learn something about clothes that will give you an appearance of slenderness.

Avoid cross lines in the cut of clothes,

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in fabrics and decoration—they detract from height. A short, bulky jacket will make you look plumper. Long draperies are your sartorial dish.

The fussier the frock, the more noticeable the ample proportions.

Plain fabrics are more flattering than those that are patterned; dark colors give the effect of more slender lines. Black is the best bet; light pastel tones should not be worn. If the upper arms are overdeveloped, the sleeveless gown is definitely a mistake—wear little cape-like affairs to conceal most of the arms.

How the neck is dressed is important. Fussy pieces of frilly neckwear are taboo. If you must wear neck fripperies, choose something that is soft and filmy—designed with long lines. The V neckline makes the neck look longer, more slender; it shades down that extra chin, detracts from the circular contour of the face.

Coffee and —

Coffee is right at any time and always welcome.

Since it's such a versatile brew, there are many questions about what should go along with it.

With an impromptu afternoon coffee, serve small sandwiches, thin and simple; small

cakes and rich cookies, hot toast with cinnamon or marmalade; candies or nuts.

If you find yourself with a coffee party on your hands—and no cream—here's the trick to solve that obstacle. Heat milk almost to the boiling point and serve with coffee that is made a little stronger than usual.

If you are planning an extra special coffee party, here's a super dessert that's just right for a big occasion.

Strawberry Refrigerator Cake

1 pint strawberries
½ cup sugar
1 tablespoon unflavored gelatin
¼ cup cold water
1 cup milk
¼ teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 cup whipping cream
2 packages shortbread cookies

Mash strawberries; add sugar and let stand. Soak gelatin in cold water for five minutes. Scald milk; add gelatin and stir until dissolved. Cool; stir in strawberries, salt and lemon juice. Whip cream stiff. When mixture begins to thicken, fold in cream. Arrange 12 shortbread cookies on bottom of pan or mold. Pour in ½ of mixture; top with 12 more shortbread cookies. Add remaining mixture and cookies. Chill in refrigerator until firm; unmold. Cut into individual servings. Serves 6 to 8.

Face Facts

Makeup foundation can work wonders for a face that doesn't quite make the grade when it comes to well proportioned features. You can create illusions that will make a long nose shorter, a broad nose narrower, eyes that are too close together wider apart, or tricks that will bring out good features and make them seem more important.

It's done by using two foundations—one lighter in tone than the other. A general rule for bringing out a feature is to use a lighter foundation. Lighter shades attract the eye, darker shades will make a feature less noticeable.

A long nose can be made to appear shorter by applying a slightly darker foundation at the tip than the foundation used on the rest of your face. If you want to make a short nose look longer, apply a thin line of light foundation from the bridge to the tip and blend into the darker foundation you are using elsewhere.

To make a weak chin appear stronger use a lighter foundation to give a highlight that will bring it out. A heavy jaw can look more delicate by applying a dark foundation at the corners.

It's terribly important when you do this makeup job with two foundations to be sure there is no sign that the two have been used. The blending of the edges between the two must be indiscernible—otherwise there is no illusion—just patchy makeup.

Chit Chat From Here and There

There's a new feeling in costume jewelry. It's the barbaric look—somewhat gentled by civilization. But even if you have been no closer to the jungle than a crowded subway, you will like the large, savage looking pieces of jewelry that smarten up your costume.

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Necklaces spread wide to cover the new bared bodices. They are used in multi-strands for length and in linked chains for

width. Pearls are clustered; colored, jewel-like stones are set in heavy carved bases. Dangle earrings look newly important with short coiffures. Bracelets are large and heavy.

A famous Hollywood hosiery designer has eyes scurrying legward with his newly designed, highly-embellished stockings. Now that more of your leg will be showing, you can really pretty it up. Lovely basic shades of stockings are highlighted with clox of wonderful designs—including flowers and monograms. There are fleur-de-lis for back heel adornment—and sometimes just contrasting tones in the seams to catch the eye. There are heavenly stockings of gold and silver mesh for evening wear.

If you have any doubts about adopting the new flapper clothes and makeup, hie yourself to see Lorelei Lee, the most fabulous flapper of them all, in "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes". It's the latest musical in town—wonderfully done—and hard to buy seats for. And if you can't get to see it, you *can* read all about Lorelei Lee in the Popular Library edition of "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes," which will cost you the small sum of twenty-five cents. To flapper or not to flapper can be decided after you've read the book.

Having your picture taken? A famous photographer of beautiful women believes in full front photographs. And he thinks that even if you are only having your face photographed, the dress is important. Especially important is the neckline. He favors the peasant neckline to keep the neck clear. If you are having a full-length portrait done, he thinks a bright, gay dress gives a younger effect.

Lips and hair are the predominant features requiring perfection for a really good photograph. Plastering on the lip coloring doesn't do the trick.

Foot Notes

If every gal devoted the same care to buying her shoes as she does to buying a hat, there would be no unattractive, uncomfortable feet and no closet full of shoe mistakes.

You don't buy the first hat you put on. In fact, you're willing to search tirelessly until you find exactly the right one. You should do the same thing to get proper fitting shoes.

There are four principal points to judge in the proper fit of shoes. First, there should be length for the toes to breathe—enough space between the tip of the toes and the end of the shoe; enough width for each toe to lie flat on the sole of the shoe and not be crowded against the toes next to it.

Second, the ball of the foot should rest squarely in and on the widest part of the shoe.

Third, the arch of the shoe should hug and support the arch of the foot, following its curve and clinging to it like a second skin.

Fourth, the heel should sit easily in the heel of the shoe, which should be neither too loose nor too tight. When these four requirements are met, the right type last has to be found. Consider your height, your weight, the length and width of your leg and the shape of the ankles and foot when you choose your shoes.

A V-throat pump will make the leg look slender. And if you are on the plump side, no elaborate detail please. Wide straps, heavy stitching and perforations are not for you.

For tall women, a one-inch heel will cut the height a bit as will multi-colored footwear, nubby textures and extension leather soles.

Short women should never wear flat heels that make them look too, too childish. Nor should they go in for the skyscraper type that makes them look as though they are toppling over.

Midsection Streamliner

In the new spring fashions, the trim skirt and fitted jackets ban thickness through the

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waist. If you want to fit the fashion, there is no time to lose.

Get to trimming. Here is a midsection streamliner:

Lie on back on floor, arms out at sides shoulder level with palms down. Knees should be bent toward chest, legs together. Keeping the knees bent and shoulders as flat on the floor as possible, lower both legs slowly to right side, touching floor. Return to starting position and lower legs to the left side. Get a firm grip on the middle muscle and hold the up-pull. Start with eight times on each side and increase gradually.

Here's another:

Lie on back on floor, arms hugging knees to chest. Roll from left to right, across the backs and sides of the hips. Bear down on the fat padding. Start with twenty-five rolls. Again keep the girdle muscles snugly up and in.

Here's to a slimmer, lovelier you for Spring—and do stop in again next time!

OUR NEXT ISSUE

Sherry Cochran was frustrated. She was so darned frustrated that she couldn't even work up much of an appetite for the succulent dinner Parke Demarest had ordered for her. Her eyes were on the couple occupying another table for two—Jim Brinton and Elayne Trudell.

Parke's voice brought her out of the fog. "Still carrying the well-known torch for Jim, eh?"

"You're a fine one to talk," she came back. "I suppose you've forgotten all about Elayne?"

"Not entirely," Parke admitted, "but I'm working on it."

"I could cheerfully strangle you, you know," Sherry said. "If you wanted to have a fight with that witch, I suppose it's your own business. But throwing her back into the open market is definitely unfair. Now look what's happened!"

"How long have you known Jim?" Parke asked.

"Just a few months, darn it. And we were just beginning to get clubby when Elayne swooped down on him!"

Parke shrugged. "Of course, if you're giving up that easily—"

"Giving up?" Sherry snapped. "What do you think I'm going to that meeting tonight for? Why do you think I'm getting into that amateur theatrical group?"

'Oh!" Parke said softly. "Now I'm beginning to get the pitch. Jim's taking part, too. Well, then I don't feel sorry for you any more. In fact, if I know you as well as I do, I'd say Elayne was the one to feel sorry for. . . ."

Follow Sherry Cochran as she sets out to win back her man in HALF WAY TO HEAVEN, the grand novelet by Ann Arden featured in our next issue. With the amateur theatrical stage as its fascinating background, HALF WAY TO HEAVEN is a glamorous romance of a scrambled foursome in the game of love. You'll adore every moment of this wonderful story.

Also in the next issue—MY HEART IS ON A PLATTER, by Nita Nolan. This novelet of a girl and a disc jockey will bring you a delightful glimpse into Broadway recording studios and radio stations that you will find most entertaining. Nadine Taylor thought the largest city in the world was the loneliest after her first three days in New York—but then things began picking up in a way that makes MY HEART IS ON A PLATTER a glowing, vivacious, adventurous romance. A swell reading dish.

Our next issue will also contain a gala selection of sparkling, scintillating short stories by some of your favorite writers, plus a goodly assortment of interesting features. Be on hand—and meanwhile, do look at Page 97 of this issue for my "Charm Column," containing personal answers to readers' queries. Thank you!

196 thrill-packed pages of fascinating love stories of the outdoors in the gala new ROMANTIC WEST ANNUAL—now on sale, only 25c at all stands!
Get your copy today!

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Michael Canavan returns to recapture a radiant dream of romance!

He came in almost shyly and she stood up to greet him

I've Loved You Long

By LOUIS ARTHUR CUNNINGHAM

GWEN had been wishing all the sleepy August morning that the phone would ring. When at last it did she reached for it eagerly and shaped a voiceless prayer that it would mean something—not just some dull, fruitless inquiry or—horrible thought—a wrong number.

She lifted it from its cradle. "Ace Realty Limited," she said in her soft,

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slightly slurred contralto; and, oh, so pleasantly—for she was the Ace Realty Company, president, secretary and executive, all in one.

"I'm calling," said a deep voice, "about the house on Snob Hill."

Gwen all but dropped the phone. Funny what a voice could do to you, although she had been waiting for ten years to hear this one. She knew it in a moment too—knew it as if she had last heard it only yesterday instead of long ago when it belonged to a black-haired curly imp with the devil lurking in his eyes and all the world's mischief in his makeup.

"Snob Hill?" She kept her voice under control but her grip on the telephone tightened. "I'm afraid I don't know the place."

"Oh, you mustn't belong to this town then," he said. "I mean the big Raeburn house on what we used to call Snob Hill when we were kids. Perhaps you can imagine why."

"Who is speaking, please!" As if she didn't know.

"Michael Canavan. I was born in this town, lived here until I was fourteen, moved away, made money. I've just come back, and as I was driving into town I saw the For Sale sign on the Raeburn place with the name and number of the Ace Realty Company. I'm interested in buying the house. I—when could I look through it!"

Gwen glanced at her wrist-watch. "It's almost noon now. Shall we say two o'clock, Mr. Canavan?"

"Okay. Two it is. I'll come there for you if you like and we can drive out in my car. By the way, do you know the Raeburn family at all?"

"Slightly. Since I happen to be selling the house for them it stands to reason I'd know some of them."

"There was a girl—a snooty girl—red-headed, a bit freckled—we used to call her the Lady Gwen. She had a pony and she was—"

"Yes—yes, I recall her quite well, Mr. Canavan."

"She was a brat." The deep voice chuckled. "She pushed me into their lily pool one day and I bumped her silly pony cart with my wagon—rather, Danny, our goat, did the bumping—and she scratched my face—the hellcat! And then her father booted me out of their garden. Where is that precious little darling now?"

"If you'd really like to know, Mr. Canavan—" and her voice lowered the voltage on the wire so coldly furious was it—"she is on this end of the phone."

THE silence was painful. She could hear the cars go swish-swish along Main Street, past the door of her little office, she could hear the hammering of her own heart. She waited, waited, her toe tapping the floor beneath her desk.

"So," said Mike Canavan at long last. "It's you, Miss Raeburn?"

"Lady Gwen. I—I'm glad you have such pleasant memories of me."

He laughed. "Lady Gwen. Well, well! Think of that! I never guessed. Well, do you—will you show me your house this—?"

"Why, not? It's business. I want to sell it and it's a big place."

"Nobody else wants it, eh? Well, I don't know why I do—or yes, I'll be truthful, I do know. When your dad kicked me out, when I was just a ragged brat, not good enough to come near his little princess, I made a vow that I'd own the place one day—maybe kick a Raeburn off it. Still want to sell?"

"Why not!" Her voice was still cool, controlled, but inside she was seething and there was a pain in her heart. This conversation was doing things to her. The soft, richly bowed mouth was twisted a little and her eyes felt funny.

"I suppose," he said, "you barely remember me?"

"Barely—if at all. Didn't you live in a shack on the other side of our garden wall?"

"Uh-huh. Pegged you with a slingshot once, used to steal apples from your orchard. Stole a rose once and threw it at you when the gardener chased me over the wall."

"I—I don't seem to recall that." How could she lie so readily. She had never for a moment forgotten young Mike Canavan or any of his wild ways. Even the rose.

"And my goat, Danny, and the cart I

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made out of a soap-box—after you got the pony and the wicker pony-cart. Last I saw of my wagon it was tangled up in your shrubbery after Danny broke the shafts when he tried to butt your pony. Ah, well, it was a long time ago. I wouldn't expect you to remember."

"Certainly not! It all sounds fantastic, Mr. Canavan." She made her voice most business-like. "Shall I see you at two then?"

"I'll be there, Miss Raeburn," he said stiffly—for Mike Canavan, "At two sharp."

"Good-by."

She put down the phone slowly, very slowly, and into her blue-gray eyes came a look bleak and lonely and utterly forlorn. "She was a brat—a snooty-girl." She could hear his voice still, sense the scorn in it. Ah, it hadn't been her fault. Her mother had died when she was four and her father had kept her as beautifully secluded as any fabulous princess of the Orient. Nothing was too good for her and very few children were good enough for her to play with. So they called her Lady Gwen. Her dresses came from London or Paris, her dogs ate off silver dishes and all her existence was something out of a fairy tale.

The Canavan shack on the other side of the high gray stone wall was an affront and an eyesore and Gilbert Raeburn had tried every means in his power to get Ned Canavan and his boy out of there and out of the community. They left finally because Ned almost killed a man in a tavern-brawl. They left and never returned—not until now, and she knew it was only young Mike who had come back—to crow over the last of the Raeburns, to take a petty revenge for those long ago, fancied injuries.

She shook her head, as if to clear it of the crowded thoughts. Then she got up from her desk and hurriedly prepared to leave the office. Up went the 'Out to lunch' sign with the time-indicator showing she'd be back at three. She figured that would be long enough to show Mike Canavan her house, perhaps long enough to sell it to him.

The thought saddened her. The house was all she had and even at that, it was heavily mortgaged. She hadn't lived there for a year or more, keeping a small apartment in town, handy to the real-estate agency she had established. She was getting by, just. But there didn't seem much ahead.

SHE MIGHT have married several times, for the "snooty girl, red-headed and a bit freckled," had grown into a lovely young woman with long and darkly-lashed eyes of a strange blue-gray colour, and hair whose reddish lights had paled to gold. But she had said no to those offers of marriage from the world she knew—offers that would have kept her life as easy and sheltered as it had been in the days when Gilbert Raeburn was wealthy. There had been nothing left by the time he died—nothing but the big old house on what the envious ones of the town called "Snob Hill."

Now that would go—to a boy who had often been hounded from its lovely gardens and chased from its apple-trees. She wondered, as she got into her shabby little coupe after the usual midday meal of a sandwich and milk, if the desire to own the Raeburn place had driven young Mike Canavan all his life and helped to make him a rich man at an age when most others were just beginning. Oil-wells and mining—oh, she had heard of Mike Canavan in the years after he left Marsfield—and she had never forgotten him or anything about him.

She drove fast out of town after she had finished her luncheon. There were things to do at the Raeburn place before she showed Mike Canavan through it—a few little pathetic ghosts to be laid away forever. She knew, now that he had come back—perhaps she had always known—why she had kept them. All because of a little girl's dreams, sweet, somehow sad and pathetic now.

The soap-box wagon with its wooden wheels, the goat-harness. The Canavans had quit Marsfield the night afer Mike's goat Danny had butted her pony, and she had bribed Tom Cary, the gardener, to get young Mike's cart for her. She had wanted the goat too, but

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Tom knew that her father would never stand for that. He had smuggled the other things into her playroom in the big loft over the carriage-shed, and there to this day they had stayed, as lonely and bereft as the toys of Little Boy Blue. But often and often she had looked at them and touched them and laughed a lot and cried a little—and remembered.

She gazed at them now, the crazily contrived wagon, the patched harness, there among her old doll-carriages, her scooters and her tricycle, her doll's house and the loved things of her childhood. Soon she would make a clean sweep of them all, give them to the poor children of the town. But not the goat-cart and the harness—not ever them.

She touched them lightly, fondly. She and the wild kid who owned them had been cat-and-dog in the years they lived so close to each other with the wall between. He had pegged her with his slingshot. She had thrown dead frogs into his garden. He had stolen her flowers; she had pushed him into the lily pool when he was trying to swipe a Victoria Regia. Yes, and she had scratched him after Danny butted her pony. But, just the same, she had cried when she learned that the Canavans had skipped town and many lonely hours had she spent in this very playroom whose window looked out on the dilapidated shack where Mike had lived. And she had treasured the cart and the goat-harness all the long years and, even now, hated what she had to do.

She fetched an ax from down stairs, chopped the wagon to kindling and burned it, along with the harness, in the little heating-stove that Tom Cary used to light for her on winter days. She stood watching as the tinder-dry wood flamed and crackled, and with its dying there seemed to die too the little, formless small-girl's dreams that belonged to that past now so far off, so unreal.

She made sure the fire was completely out, that no traces remained; then went back to her car and drove into town. She was sitting in her office when Mike Canavan drove up, just as the town clock struck two. She saw the car stop in front of the office and a tall sunburned fellow, his dark head uncovered, step out and cross the pavement. She had rather looked for something spectacular in the way of motors, something, say, of a smashing yellow or fire-truck red, but the long open car was black with a minimum of chrome and the wild Canavan himself wore a conservative gray pin-stripe suit. And how tall he had grown from the stubby boy she used to wrangle with of old.

HE CAME in almost shyly and she stood up and walked to meet him. His eyes were bold and black as ever, his face thin, his lip corners prone to curl up as they always had. He stood, staring at her, not rudely, with something in his eyes that made her heart act strangely, that made it hard to be cool and aloof and—snooty.

"Mr. Canavan!" She held out her hand and he took it slowly and held it only a moment, his eyes searching her face.

"I—my face is still a bit red," he said and his smile was the merry devil-may-care sunburst that used to make it so hard for even his victims to be long angry with him. "When I found out it was you I was talking to."

"It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter in the least, I assure you. If you're ready now, we'll go out to Snob Hill."

"Oh, I say!"

She turned from him and reached for the droopy leghorn-hat that went with her green linen suit. She was trim and tall, almost up to his shoulder, and her hair was a pale golden glory and her skin only lightly tanned. Her nose was small and pert, and only slightly freckled.

She felt the impact of his eyes as he held the car door open for her. She sunk back in the deep leather cushions. A long time since she had ridden in a car like this, but it was all quite natural to her.

"Ah," he said, his face grave, his lips twitching, as they rolled smoothly away, "if only I had my goat-wagon and Danny to draw us! Wouldn't I just love to tool him up those ancestral avenues of yours with the pride of the Raeburns

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beside me. Poetic vengeance—isn't that what you call it?"

"Only small people harbour hatreds, petty grudges, things like that. You surely haven't kept, all these years, that little boy attitude of 'I'll get even with you some day!'"

"I've never forgotten, Miss Raeburn. All my life I've remembered. You, of course, forgot."

"Of course." She kept her chin proudly tilted, her profile partly turned away. "What had I to remember anyway!"

"Oh, only a dirty-faced, ragged brat of a boy—Ned Canavan's kid, the town terror, and his silly cart drawn by a goat named Danny. How furious you used to get when I'd drive abreast of you in your elegant pony-cart. And the day Danny chased your outfit up the drive and butted the pony—the day your dad chased me. We left town that night, my dad and I. He's gone now."

"Mine too," said Gwen softly.

For a while Mike was silent, driving expertly, not too fast. All about him, she thought, had been toned down, gentled, and his manhood was a fine fulfillment of the high-spirits and courage of his small boy days.

"And what became of my cart and all?" he said at last.

"How should I know?" She dared not look at him. "Someone made firewood of the silly thing, I dare say."

"I suppose so," said Mike wistfully. "Well, I'll never forget it. I wish I had it still—I'd like to take my kids driving in it some time."

"Are you married?" The very thought sent a stab right through her.

"No. But one day I'll be married."

Naturally, she thought, there'd be girls, lot of them, to go hard for those dark good looks, the laughing-cavalier smile, the easy friendliness.

He was whistling an old, old song, older than either of them, when they drove up the long, weed-grown drive to the house.

SHE LOOKED at him sharply to see if that tell-tale glint of devilish mischief was in his eyes. But his face was quite grave as he braked the car in front of the old gray stone dwelling.

"I wonder," he said, gazing pensively up at it, "if I wasn't happier in the last job I drove up this road. Gosh, how I laughed when Danny butted the pony and you screaming and scolding like a spitfire and your dad and the gardener —"

"Shall we look through the house now, Mr. Canavan?"

"Eh!" He started as if from dreaming. "Oh, I forgot. You don't remember much about that famous episode in the life of Mike Canavan's goat and Mike himself. Yes, I'm eager to see the house."

"You—you never did get inside it, did you?"

"No," he said softly, ignoring the hurt that she instantly regretted trying to inflict. "No, I never did. I—I'd just as soon have thought of trying to get into heaven."

Gwen felt her heart-strings tighten. He seemed so young, still—so vulnerable. She led the way into the house, through the long halls, the high-ceiled lovely rooms. She had sold most of the furniture.

"It's much as I always thought it would be," said Mike, as they strolled from hall to parlor to dining-room to library and den. "Only lovelier. Does it hurt you much to leave it, Miss Raeburn?"

"I have no one," she answered, and in her heart she cried. No one, she thought, and nothing—not even the memory of you. It's gone! You're not the laughing boy I knew. You're a man who worked years to come back and get even with me and call me a brat and a snooty girl!

"I'll show you the outbuildings now, if you like. It's all in good repair but I suppose if you buy it, you or your wife will want it all done over. I was—always a bit lonely here."

She remembered how she used to look, each day, for the little boy next door, to make faces at him even uglier than the ones he made at her. She could see him from her playroom window as he climbed on top of the wall that would never raise him quite high enough to look into the place he knew was filled

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with wondrous toys—girl's toys, he used to say contemptuously, hiding his hunger for what to him was strange and beautiful.

She did not want to go to the playroom today but Mike stopped at the stairway and she had to offer to show him the place.

Anyway, it didn't matter if he saw it now.

There was nothing to betray her, to make him laugh at her!

The afternoon sun was bright in the big loft where the abandoned toys looked so neglected and forlorn. He stood, gazing about him, then his eyes came to rest on her impassive face with a look strangely gentle.

"So this was your playroom," he said. "I tried and tried to see into it. I'd climb on the wall and stand on tiptoe but I could never quite make it and I always wanted more than anything to have just one look."

"There wasn't much to see—my dolls, my playthings." How often she had wished that he might be allowed to come up and play with her and take away some of the unbearable loneliness of those hours.

"I've grown a lot since then, Lady Gwen," he said, and she started, as much at the implication of his words as at the way he used her nick-name—not mockingly at all, but fondly.

"I—what do you mean?"

"I walked around to our old place today, right after I called you from the canteen down the road. I climbed up on the wall and I could see in here without any trouble."

HER HEART seemed to stand still. What if he had seen the goat-cart, the harness.

"I could have sworn I saw Danny's harness and the cart I made out of the soap-box. But it must have been fancy."

"Yes." Her voice was very low. "One can imagine things in the shadows."

He came close to her and, try as she would, she could not find strength to move away. He stood, looking down at her and his hands rested on her shoulders. She tried to move away then, but he held her gently.

"Why did you keep them, Lady Gwen?"

"I—I don't know. Oh, don't ask me, please."

"All right. Then why did you destroy them? I know you burned them; there are some splinters on the floor. Surely you can tell me that!"

She shook her head. She wanted to cry and to laugh at the same time. She wanted to push him away and she wanted him to take her in his arms—and he did.

"I came back here for you—not for your house, Lady Gwen," he said, and tilted up her chin and looked into her eyes and kissed her lips gently but hungrily.

"So?" She closed her eyes and spoke dreamily: "'A snooty girl, red-headed, a bit freckled—a brat!'"

"A lovely brat," said Mike. "I adored her."

"You had the strangest ways of showing your adoration, Michael."

"One grows up," he said. "One learns."

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

MY HEART IS ON A PLATTER

A Novelet of a Disc Jockey and a Girl by NITA NOLAN

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THE FRIENDLY SET invites you to receive interesting letters—and find new friends who are sincere and worthwhile.

To introduce yourself write to me—addressing your letter to Mrs. Elizabeth Elder, care of THRILLING LOVE, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. Write your letter in such a way that others will be eager to know more about you. Be sure to sign your full name and address for our files.

Give me a nickname under which you want your letter to be published. It will be only under this name that other readers will know you. They will write to you in my care—and I will forward their letters.

No letter will be forwarded unless a stamped envelope is enclosed. *Women and girls may write only to women and girls, and men only to men.* After the first letters, direct correspondence between you and your new friends will have been established.

IMPORTANT: In writing to me, or in requesting me to forward your letters, do not neglect to give the following particulars: Your name, address, age, sex. Supply at least one reference.

In asking that letters be forwarded, clearly print the number assigned to your chosen friend on the stamped envelope which you enclose. All letters should be written neatly in ink. Do not seal the letter that you wish forwarded. If any unwelcome letters should be received by readers, I would appreciate your forwarding them to this department.

Elizabeth Elder

POPULAR GIRL

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young Negro girl of 18 years of age. I live in a very small town, and it gets very lonesome here. I was voted as one of the most popular girls at a near-by Naval Base. I love all sports, and enjoy reading and writing letters. I'd like to have pen pals from all over the world. I'll try to make my letters as interesting as possible.

ALICE No. 8277

SOUTH AFRICAN RESIDENT

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 19-year-old boy, and live in South Africa. My hobbies are dancing, horseback riding, swimming, and hiking. I would like to correspond with any chaps about my age, from all over the world. I promise to answer any and all letters as quickly as possible.

JIM No. 8278

WANTS EUROPEAN FRIENDS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am an 18-year-old girl, who enjoys writing and making new friends. I want very much to hear from girls about my age who live in Europe or in far distant places. I will answer all letters immediately, and will make them as interesting as I possibly can. So, how about it, girls?

FRANCES No. 8279

YOUNG WAITRESS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am seventeen years old, and have a job as a waitress. I am single, and like to read, write, dance, roller skate, and go for long walks. I would like very much to correspond with girls of my own age. I promise to make my letters very entertaining, and will answer all letters as quickly as possible.

LORRAINE No. 8280

LONELY FELLOW

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 21-year-old boy, who is very lonely. I would like very much to hear from pen pals from all over the world. I promise to answer all letters that are written to me, as quickly as possible. My favorite pastime is listening to good music.

ALDEN No. 8281

COLLECTS BOOK MARKS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a single girl of 26 years of age, and would like to correspond with lots of girls from 20 to 30 years old. I like most any sports, but my favorites are dancing, sewing, reading good books and writing letters. I also collect stamps and book marks. Who will be the first to write?

GLORIA No. 8282

BACHELOR

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 32-year-old lonely bachelor. I would like very much to hear from other fellows around my age. I enjoy most sports, and like good music. I will answer all letters, and promise to make them as interesting as possible. So, how about it, boys?

EDDIE No. 8283

SOUTH AFRICAN MISS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young South African girl of 14 years of age, and I would like a few girl pen pals of about 14 to 18 years of age from America. I love swimming, going to the movies, roller skating, and riding motor cycles. I hope to hear from some girls soon.

MARGARET No. 8284

FOND OF ANIMALS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 28, married and have a 2 year old daughter. I like to bake, embroider, read, and most of all, write letters. I love animals, especially dogs. I do hope to receive many letters as it is quite lonely for me. I will answer all letters which I receive.

LAURA No. 8285

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HOME LOVER

Dear Mrs. Elder: I'm a 40-year-old widow with a 5-year old son. I'm a home lover, and like to keep house, cook, sew, crochet, do my own laundry, and do everything to make a home life complete. But since I don't have anyone, but my young son and myself to do for, it doesn't take up enough of my time. So how, about some of you ladies, writing me?

KAY No. 8286

STAMP COLLECTOR

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 26-year-old married man. My hobbies are collecting stamps, First Day Covers, First Day Cachets, and First Day Flights. I would be very glad to exchange stamps with other stamp collectors who would be interested in doing so.

ERNEST No. 8287

YOUNG MATRON

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a lonely married American girl of 22, living in Canada. I would like to hear from girls my age, living back in the States. My hobbies are knitting, writing, reading, and listening to the radio. I hope to hear from all you American girls, and soon.

ANN No. 8288

ENJOY SKATING

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a lonely bachelor of 30 years of age. My favorite hobby is writing letters. I would like very much to hear from young men between the ages of 20 to 40. I enjoy all kinds of music, and skating. I hope to receive many letters, and promise to answer all of them.

CLARK No. 8289

WILL EXCHANGE SNAPS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am very interested in writing to friends from all over the world. My favorite sports are swimming, skating, and skiing. I will exchange snaps and post cards with the friends I will write to.

DOROTHY No. 8290

TEEN-AGER

Dear Mrs. Elder: I would like to get a lot of pen pals. I am 16 years of age, and although I love to write letters, I have never had any pen pals. I promise to write as interesting letters as possible. I enjoy almost all sports, and will make all my letters as enjoyable as I can.

HELEN No. 8291

COLLECTS CARDS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 31-year-old married woman. I have a small baby. My hobby is collecting view cards, and letter writing. We have just moved to this city, and I get very lonesome and have plenty of time to write. Please help fill my mail box.

EDWINA No. 8292

ENJOYS DANCING

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 13-year-old girl. I like to write letters, and I would like to correspond with girls from 12 to 16 years of age. I like to roller skate, ice skate and ride a bicycle. I enjoy singing and dancing. So how's about it girls, let me hear from you.

BETTE No. 8293

AIRMAN

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young man of 24 years of age. I am very lonely and would like to have fellow pen pals of my own age. At present, I am in the U. S. Air Force. I like golf, tennis and bowling for sports. I also like music, dancing and good books. I will answer all letters and exchange snapshots. Come on fellows, how about a line?

TED No. 8294

CANADIAN LASS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 17, who would like to hear from girls on ranches and in all parts of Canada and the States. I enjoy nearly all sports. I like to sing, dance, read, draw and write. I love all animals and love horseback riding. I hope to hear from girls around my age very soon.

PAULINE No. 8295

ENJOYS CROCHETING

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a married woman of 29 years of age. I live in West Virginia. My hobbies are crocheting, knitting and reading. I have traveled extensively and can tell of many interesting things I've seen. I would love to hear from women from all over the world.

ANNE No. 8296

LIKES SPORTS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 17-year-old girl who enjoys all sports. I also like to dance and go to the movies. My favorite sport is swimming. Since I contracted polio last year, I had the pleasure of writing to many pen pals and hope to hear from many more.

MARY No. 8297

LAD FROM MANILA

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a boy of 14 years of age, and would like to have pen pals from all over the world. I live in Manila, and promise to write interesting letters to anyone who wishes of Manila. My hobbies are sports, dancing, and collecting stamps.

RICARDO No. 8298

MUSIC LOVER

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl 13 years of age. I am a lover of music. I also like to read, sew and knit. I promise to answer all letters, and will try to make them as interesting as possible. So, what are you girls waiting for?

MARILYN No. 8299

ENJOYS WESTERN MUSIC

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 15 year old girl from Canada, and live in a little mining town up north. I enjoy western music, dancing and also many outdoor sports. I would like to hear from girls all over the world, and will trade pictures with them.

KATE No. 8300

FAMILY OF SWIMMERS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 37-year-old mother of two children. My family's biggest sport is swimming, which we are quite good at. My spare time hobby is embroidery. I would like to hear from women my own age, with families also, who live in all different parts of the world. The further away, the more thrill I will get out of their letters.

LENORE No. 8301

GIRL FRESHMAN

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 14 years of age, and a freshman in high school. My favorite sports are ball games and picnics. So come on, girls, fill up my mailbox with letters. I promise to answer all letters as quickly as possible.

BARBARA No. 8302

LONELY GIRL

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 16 years of age, and live in a very small town. I would like to hear from girls about my age from all over the world, as I am very lonely. I promise to answer all letters, and to make them as interesting as possible. My hobbies are writing letters and collecting movie star pictures.

JEAN No. 8303

SEWS AND COOKS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young girl of 13 years of

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age. My hobbies are sewing and cooking. I like basketball and soft ball. I played both last year at school, but have orders from the doctor not to play any more. I would like to have some pen pals, so come on girls!

NAOMI No. 8304

ENJOYS RECEIVING LETTERS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a married woman of 22 years of age. I have a little girl. I enjoy writing and receiving letters. I also like the movies, skating, reading, and sewing. I would like all women around my age to write me. I promise to answer all letters, and to make them interesting.

MATTIE No. 8305

REGISTERED NURSE

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 38-year-old registered nurse, and am quite lonely. I would like to hear from people who are out west. I will make my letters interesting, as I have traveled quite a bit. I enjoy the movies, skating, and listening to the radio.

BETTY No. 8306

COLLECTS PICTURE POSTCARDS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl 15 years of age, and would like to hear from girls about my age. I like swimming, skating, and playing softball. I've started collecting picture postcards, and would like to receive them from all over the world. I would like to have pen pals from all over the world.

ELIZABETH No. 8307

NAVY WIFE

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a Navy wife of 25, and have a 2 year old boy. My husband is stationed in Guam, and I get very lonely. I would like, very much, to hear from other servicemen's wives with children. I promise to answer all letters written me, and will make them interesting.

EVELYN No. 8308

ENJOYS DRAWING

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young girl of 14. I enjoy writing letters and receiving them very much. I like to draw and read. I would like to get letters from girls from the ages of 14 to 18. How about you girls dropping me a line. I will answer all letters as quickly as possible, and will exchange snapshots.

JEAN No. 8309

LIKES HORSEBACK RIDING

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young bachelor of 26. I like horseback riding, movies, ice skating, writing stories, etc. I would like to hear from other fellows interested in the same things. I promise to answer all letters and exchange snapshots if desired.

ROBERT No. 8310

LONELY YOUNG MAN

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young Canadian, 24 years of age. I am a lonely young man who would like to hear from ex-G. I.'s, sailors, and also civilians from 20 to 30 years of age. My hobbies are collecting records and health magazines. I also like to write letters. I will exchange snaps with all who write.

JOHN No. 8311

AFRICAN HOUSE WIFE

Dear Mrs. Elder: I live in Africa and am 28 years of age, married, with a child of 2 years old. I am very keen on movies, swimming, hiking, music, and meeting people. My greatest ambition is to be able to make my own clothes, but I just can't sew. I'd love to hear from all girls either married or single from the ages of 24 to 30.

MILLIE No. 8312

PLAYS A MOUTH HARP

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 17 years of age, who has many hobbies. Two of them are singing, and playing a mouth harp. My ambition is to become a model. I would like to hear from girls about my age. Come on, girls!

EDITH No. 8313

NEEDS CHEERING UP

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 19 years of age who will be very happy to acquire new pen pals. I have been in a sanitorium for quite a while, and need a bit of cheering up, and would be very glad to hear from girls from all over the world. I like both outdoor and indoor sports, reading and writing. I'll answer each letter.

EVELYN No. 8314

(More Letters Next Issue)

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WHAT YOUR STARS REVEAL

(Continued from page 9)

stand in the way of your work. The zodiacal opposition between Jupiter and Saturn, forming a Mutable Sign-cross with your Sun Sign, can make you vulnerable to criticism.

Take care of the demands imposed by your family, but do not evade a single business responsibility. Your future success depends on the thoroughness and reliability with which you carry out your assignments. The record for integrity that you chalk up this summer can stand you in good stead next winter when Jupiter returns to the same position in your horoscope. By then Saturn will have moved away from its present location, allowing you more leeway in domestic matters.

In the interim, apportion a few dollars to the liquidation of your debts while the Jupiter-Uranus vibrations make it possible to safeguard your financial credit.

Feels Lonely

PROBLEM: I am getting on in years. Since my husband died six years ago, I feel terribly lonely. My children are married, and live in another part of the state. Does my horoscope show what I can do to make friends? I was born February 14, 1895.—*Mrs. Mary W. J.*

ANSWER: The acquisition of friends need not be a problem for you since you were born when the Sun occupied the Sign Aquarius which rules hopes, wishes, and companionship. Your desire has wonderfully fine cosmic support. This is revealed by the trine aspect that the Sun forms with Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto in the Sign Gemini which rules neighbors, short trips, as well as mental and manual skills.

You probably can talk and write fluently as the result of these powerful aspects. People like to hear what you have to say, and are pleased when you visit them.

However, your attitude might be so aggressive that you give the impression of being stubborn and opinionated. You cannot bear to be contradicted because of the square aspects that the Sun forms with Saturn and Uranus in the Sign Scorpio. These Planets occupy your solar Tenth House which rules your reputation. Perhaps you have given

[*Turn page*]

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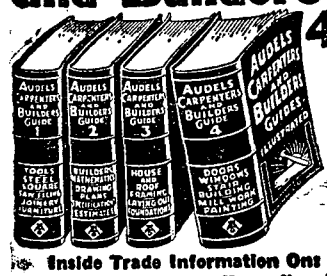

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some people the impression that you are domineering, and they told others.

It may not be easy to alter this viewpoint, since it is your nature to be assertive. For the sake of attracting more friends, however, try to modify what you say so that your remarks do not sound so forceful. You are capable of suavity as well as stubbornness. The first trait can attract friends; the second quality can repel them. You have enough ability and initiative to transform your manners in such a way that you appear courteous even when you do not agree with the ideas expressed by others.

Your friendly attitude can appear authentic because the solar influences in your natal horoscope associate you closely with the *endowments* for interesting and inspiring friendships.

Hard to Figure Him

PROBLEM: After going steady with Jim for seven months, I am beginning to wonder if he has serious intentions. He never mentions marriage, and changes the subject when I start to talk about it. I know he is shy, so I wonder if that is why he does not discuss our future. Can Astrology explain the reason for his attitude? I was born May 12, 1929. Jim was born September 11, 1927.—*Ann G. D.*

ANSWER: You are right in assuming that your friend's hesitancy about proposing marriage is caused by a form of timidity. He has a strong sense of decorum since he was born when the Sun, Mercury and Venus occupied the Sign Virgo which is symbolized by "the Virgin."

This stellium in his horoscope is in harmonious trine aspect with your Sun in the Sign Taurus, creating beneficial influences for sincere affection. In fact, his feelings toward you are profoundly romantic because

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his Sun Sign occupies your solar Fifth House which rules love.

You have a more determined and forthright nature than Jim. When you want to do something, you do not allow any impediments to stand in your way. In this respect your determination can be compared to that of "the Bull," which symbolizes the Sign Taurus. Once you start in any direction, you keep going at full speed until you reach your goal.

Being in love with a man who has gentler attributes makes it necessary for you to control your forcefulness. Give him a chance to emerge from his self-imposed restraint. He probably will feel more free in conveying his emotional regard after Saturn, symbol of restrictions, leaves his Sun Sign toward the end of this year.

Home Conditions

PROBLEM: Does my horoscope show an improvement in home conditions this year? Every improvement I planned has been blocked. What I want most is a home of my own. I was born December 7, 1911.—*Mrs. Cora E. T.*

ANSWER: The feeling that you are being

[*Turn page*]

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frustrated is due in part to your impetuous traits, which makes you want to do everything in a hurry. This impulsiveness is due to your having been born when the Sun occupied the Sign Sagittarius which rules exuberance.

Your constant desire for a home of your own is indicated in your horoscope by the presence of the Moon and Neptune in the Sign Cancer which rules domestic and family matters. At present the Planet Uranus, symbol of progress, is transiting this part of your birth chart. This influence can bring about important changes in your household arrangements, making it possible for you to attain your wish. The matter may be solved of its own accord this summer, or relatively soon, when Uranus is in trine aspect with Jupiter in your solar Fourth House which rules property.

ROMANCE CAME FROM COLLEGE

(Concluded from page 78)

me, that's why he said my big romance was arriving this weekend."

"Serves him right for reading other people's mail," said Vince, still holding Nancy in his arms. "Will you marry me, Nancy?"

"I might as well, since it has just dawned on me that I have been in love with you for a long time," Nancy said softly. "Besides you always have seemed like one of the family."

Vince kissed her and she found it a rose colored preview of the long years of happiness that would be theirs.

"Bless you children," said Spaulding Snell as he came down the stairs.

"Thank you, sir," Vince said as he released Nancy. "I suspect the scream and all the rest of it was your idea. Would you mind telling me what your nickname was at college?"

"They called me 'Cupid'," Spaulding Snell Senior said a bit shamefacedly.

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Mrs. J. S., Forest Park, Pa.: A guest who breaks a cup should apologize briefly and then talk to the hostess, at the very first opportunity, about replacing it. If your hostess dismisses it lightly, there is no reason to insist upon replacement.

Geraldine, Fort Worth, Texas: A good astringent lotion applied at frequent intervals during the day will remove shine from an oily skin. Apply the lotion to a pad of absorbent cotton and wipe over the nose, chin or any area with an offending shine. Watch your diet, too—fat, starch and sugar intake should be kept to a minimum.

Jo Ann, Peekskill, N. Y.: To bleach a slight growth of superfluous hair on the upper lip, use a preparation consisting of two teaspoonsful of peroxide of hydrogen and one-half teaspoonful of household ammonia. If the skin is dry, dilute the preparation and follow up with an application of cream.

Miss Jenny, Hollywood, Florida: To cover up a broken nail cut a piece of transparent Scotch tape to fit the nail. Attach it to the nail and then cover entirely with nail polish.

M. M. R., St. Clair, Mich.: To keep the elbows soft and smooth and free from discoloration scrub them with soap and water, using a stiff-bristled hand brush for the job. Dry thoroughly and then rub lightly with pumice or rough cleansing grains. Massage them with a good cream and let the cream remain on for at least ten minutes. Repeat the treatment twice a week.

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Read
LISTEN, GIRLS!
A Chat With the Editor on Pages 79-83

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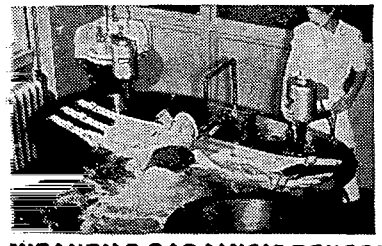

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